From the First to the Second Italian Republic in Catania (Sicily). Politics, economy and society between cosmetic changes and deep continuities.

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the crisis of the Italian First Republic occurred at the beginning of 1990s, from a local perspective, that of the city of Catania in Sicily. Despite the crisis received a copious amount of academic descriptions and explanations there has not been any attempt to examine it from a specific local context so to reveal what new insights such context can provide in regard to both the causes, development and outcomes of the crisis. Besides, unlike most accounts on these events, this study questions the often vaguely used notion of crisis rather than take it as an analytical starting point. In order to do so, it will be examined not only Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history of crisis (1988) to reveal the meaning(s) of the term crisis and the distinction suggested by Burckhardt in his *Reflexion on History* (1943) between 'authentic' and 'fake' crises but also what a crisis consist of and what consequences it can trigger, especially in regards to democratic systems so to ultimately establish whether or not it was a crisis what occurred in the Sicilian city.

The study, which is based on 39 in-depth interviews along with electoral, judicial and socioeconomic data gathered from institutional reports, focuses on the city political system, economy and society both before, during and after the crisis of the early 1990s. In doing so it aims first to reveal what kind of democratic system went into crisis in the city so to then identify not only what event or set or events triggered its crisis but more importantly the level of continuity and discontinuity with what came after the crisis, namely the so-called Second Republic.

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II

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This research examines the crisis of the Italian First Republic which occurred in the early 1990s, from a local perspective, that of the city of Catania in Sicily. While the crisis has been extensively described and explained at the national level, there has been no attempt to investigate it from a specific geo-political context. Besides, unlike other major Italian cities, Catania occupied a quite peripheral position[1] during those years and can, therefore, provide alternative insights into the causes and views on the development and consequences of these events.

Yet, unlike most accounts on the Italian turmoil, this research aims first to reveal what is meant by 'crisis' rather than take this vaguely used term as analytical starting point. In this respect, along with the meaning(s) behind this term it is also necessary to design a sort of 'normative scheme' in order to establish how a crisis erupts, what it involves and what consequences it can cause, especially within a democratic system.

This chapter is divided into five sections: section 1.1 will attempt to provide a theoretical background in support of the analysis of the Italian crisis; section 1.2 will briefly introduce the research subject by offering a summary of older and more recent academic debate on the decline of the First Republic. Section 1.3 will focus on the relevance of the research, that is why a local-scale analysis of the crisis is necessary to fully understand not only its causes but more importantly its developments and outcomes, especially in terms of continuity and/or discontinuity between the old and new regime. Finally, section 1.4 and 1.5

[1] As will be discussed in section 1.2, unlike Milan, Rome or Palermo that were at the centre of these events, Catania remained on the edge.

address the research questions and discuss the approach adopted, the procedures followed along with the research's aims and structure.

1.1 Research theoretical background

1.1.1 Theorising transitions toward democracy

An initial and, at the same time, crucial concern this research shares with most of the current literature on the crisis of the Italian First Republic is the search for a theoretical background. A first aid in this direction is offered by some political scientists (Pasquino, 2000; Bicchieri et al 2005; Fabbrini, 2006-2009; Morlino, 2009) who describe the crisis as a case of transition from a consensual to a competitive democracy[2]. As Lijpahrt (1984) claims, these two democratic models lay at opposite sides of a spectrum within which it is possible to inscribe both hypothetic and existing democracies[3]. Thus, while consensual democracies are characterised by the presence of a multi-party system, a disaggregated representation of interests and the aggregation in government of different political forces, competitive democracies are organised around a bi-polar party systems, aggregated representation of interests and the alternation in government of different political forces[4].

However, from a theoretical point of view, most of the production on political and institutional crises and changes has regarded transitions *toward* democracy[5], rather than *within* democracy. As Pasquino (2000) claims, in fact, "a theory on transitions does not exist, especially for those transitions that occur within democratic regimes. Transitions, in political science, refer to inter-regime and not intra-regime changes" (Ibid, 313). Besides, the author

[2] The Italian First Republic belonged to the consensual model being a system ideologically polarised across the communist and anti-communist division and shaped by an electoral and party system that functioned according to a multi-polar logic (Pasquino, 2000; 33).

[3]Such distinction is established by adopting an operational logic that focuses on the links between institutional systems, the party systems and interests representation.

[4] Similarly Powell (1984), with the focus on voters representation, distinguishes between majoritarian and proportional democracy

[5] See also Munk and Left (1999); Guo (1999); Munk (2015).

also notes that even those theories developed to explain the crises of authoritarian regimes and the transition toward democratic ones, rather than look at the crises and transitions per se, have prevalently focused at identifying the pre-conditions for those to happen[6].

Consistent with this, Fabbrini (2006) argues that, whereas both types of transitions are originated by the eruption of a crisis and distinguished by the need to redefine the rules of the game, in cases of transitions *towards* democracy the actual outcome, namely the establishment of a democratic order, is 'visible' and characterised by a period of consolidation; on the contrary, in transition *within* democracy, "there is not *one* specific equilibrium point that has to be inevitably achieved in order to institutionalize the passage from one to another democratic model" (Ibid; 23)[7].

Significantly, to such theoretical shortage corresponds the lack of pertinent empirical cases to compare with the Italian one. While, in fact, in the last decades, there has been an increased number of transitions from authoritative regimes *towards* democratic ones, the same cannot be claimed for cases of transition *within* democracy. An exemption, though, proposed by some author (Bull and Newell, 1996; Bull and Rhode, 1997; Fabbrini, 2000) but questioned by others (Pasquino, 2000; Morlino, 2009: Bull, 2012), is the transition between the Fourth and Fifth French Republic (1958-1962).

In terms of similarities, as argued by Fabbrini (2000), the French Fourth Republic and the Italian First Republic were both undermined by external pressures, the rebellion of the French generals in Algeria for France and the financial constraints imposed by European integration

[6] Accordingly, whether the issues has been examined from a structuralist point of view (Lipset, 1960; Moore, 1966) or from an elite strategic choice one (Metzer and Richard (1981) or from an institutional or economic approach (Tilly, 2007), the focus was on those structural, institutional and economic arrangements that would encourage a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime.

[7] Ultimately, while Allum and Newell (2003) propose the notion of 'requilibration' elaborated by Linz"s (1978), Bull (2009) argues that such notion regards changes in democratic regime which are threatened by collapse. Whereas, as it will be discussed in chapter 3, the crisis of the early 1990s undermined an entire political system and its rules, democracy in the country was never at stake (Ibid; 107).

for Italy. Besides, both countries were governed by consensual political systems which had not enjoyed alternation in government (Bull, 2009) and in both cases such external pressures forced the system to increase the competitiveness of the central government by disempowering the veto power hold by political parties and parliament[8].

Yet, as Pasquino (2000) stresses, a crucial difference between the two cases is that differently than in Italy, in France the transfer of power from the legislature to the executive was institutionalised not only at electoral level[9] but more importantly at a constitutional one[10]. This has encourage some authors (Fabbrini, 2000; Fabbrini, 2006; Morlino, 2009; Bull, 2012; Silveri, 2015) to question whether or not the 'transition' between the First and Second Republic has ever ended. If by 'transition' is meant the period between one political regime and a different one, the lack of constitutional change in the distribution of institutional power during the Second Republic has left the relationship between parliament, parties and government unchanged[11].

On the contrary, however, if the focus goes from the national to the local context such comparison with the French case may provide some support. As it will be discussed in chapter 5, differently than at central level, the crisis of the early 1990s triggered a series of reforms of the local governments that included not only a re-organisation of the electoral system towards a competitive model, as it was the case at the national level, but also an effective re-distribution of the institutional power between the executive and the councils in favour of the former (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997; Trigilia, 2005). The reforms were purposively designed to provide more governmental stability, accountability and efficiency of

[8] Besides, as Pasquino (2000) notices, "such similarities should not be surprising both because the Italian constitution was written taking into serious consideration the one of the French Fourth Republic and because the social structure and the party system in the two countries were not so dissimilar (Ibid; 323).
[9] A new majoritarian run-off electoral law was in fact passed in 1958 so to polarized electoral competition.
[10] Between 1958 and 1962, in fact, most of the institutional and political rules that had governed the French Forth Republic undergone a significant process of transformation (Ibid, 174).
[11] In this respect, more recent investigations have questioned whether a real change occurred or rather if it was a case of re-adjustment (Morlino, 2009) in which the 'new' ended up remarkably similar to the 'old' (Bull, 2012).

local government by increasing the role played by the mayors who, in contrast to the past, were now directly elected by voters[12].

Yet, although the reforms play a crucial role, to examine the Italian crisis at local level and grasp its peculiarities in Catania one has to combine the distinction between consensual and competitive democracy with the one between clientelistic and programmatic politics[13]. As it will be discussed in chapter 5, in fact, the consensual model of the Italian First Republic in Catania took the form of a clientelistic governance of the city (Caciagli, 1977)[14] which undermined the stability, transparency and efficiency of the local political system. It is therefore necessary to determine whether the reforms of the local governments towards a more competitive model gave way in the Sicilian city to a transition from a clientelistic to programmatic politics increasing the quality of democracy or despite, such structural transformations, the similarities between the old and the new were greater than their differences.

1.1.2 The quality of democracy

As some authors (Diamond and Morlino, 2004; Beetham; 2008; Fabbrini; 2009; Morlino, 2010) suggest, to evaluate whether or not a given democracy is qualitatively good it is first necessary to explain what is meant with both democracy and quality. Regarding the former, while a more exhaustive definition will be given in chapter 2, for the present scope and building on Morlino (2008a) democracy can be described as a "a political regime characterised by at least universal, adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; more than one political party; and more than one source of information''

[12] Similar electoral and institutional reforms also concerned both the election of provincial (1993) and regional (1995) presidents.

[13] In political terms, clientelism has been linked with particularistic and fragmented policy makings and use of public resources in contrast with the collective and planned ones charactering programmatic or policy-oriented politics (Roniger, 2004, Hopkin, 2006; Golden, 2010; Kusche, 2013; Santoro, 2014).

[14] For a definition and a brief discussion of the academic accounts on clientelism see subsection 1.2.3

(Ibid;.42).

Then, looking at the industrial and marketing sectors, one can identify three dimensions of quality. First, quality of a product as the result of exact and systemically controlled procedures; second, quality of a product as the structural features of a given product, such as design and material (content); finally, quality of product based on the level of satisfactions among customers (results) (Morlino, 2010).

Thus, if these dimensions (procedures-contents-results) are applied to a democratic regime, its quality can be measured by establishing first if citizen have the opportunity and ability to monitor the efficacy of the institutional and political systems (procedural dimension); second, if citizens enjoy certain level of liberty and equality (content dimension) and, thirdly, if the system satisfied citizens' need and requests (result dimension)[15]. In view of that, "a good democracy accords its citizens ample freedom, political equality, and control over public policies and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions" (Diamond and Morlino, 2004; 22).

Bearing the above in mind, it is possibly to generate a basic, and therefore not exhaustive, list of dimensions that combined can produce a good quality democracy. Accordingly, authors indicate five 'procedural dimensions', the rule of law, vertical and horizontal accountability, political competition, and participation; two 'content dimensions' freedom and equality and one 'result dimension' namely institutional and political

[15] Similarly, Beetham et al. (2008) argue that "the key democratic principles are those of *popular control* and *political equality.* These principles define what democrats at all times and in all places have struggled for – to make popular control over public decision making both more effective and more inclusive; to remove an elite monopoly over decision making and its benefits; and to overcome obstacles such as those of gender, ethnicity, religion, language, class, wealth and so on to the equal exercise of citizenship rights" (Ibid; 20).

responsiveness[16]. However, apart from looking at each of these dimension individually[17], to fully assess the quality of a given democracy the focus must be addressed at the way these dimensions interact, reinforce and influence each other.

As O'Donnel (1984) argues, under the rule of law an independent judicial system applies fairly and consistently a set of clear, publicly known, universal, stable and no retroactive laws to all citizens who are therefore equal before the law. Thus the legal system acts as a guarantor for political and civil rights and provide horizontal accountability by scrutinising the legality of official actions[18]. By contrast if the rule of law is weak, as, for instance, in those countries where corruption is widespread, both civil and political rights are undermined[19] and with them citizens opportunity to participate and control official actions (vertical accountability)[20]. Besides, as stressed by Della Porta and Vannucci (1999), a weak rule of law, on the one side, reduces citizens' confidence in government and the ability of this latter to respond to the former requests (responsiveness)[21] and, on the other side, provides the opportunity to the most resourceful and well-connected social classes to perpetrate abuse of power at the expense of fair political competition[22].

[16] In this respect, Diamond and Morlino (2004) suggest three different meanings of 'quality': according, a high quality democracy has to satisfy citizen expectations (quality of results), promote free association and political equality (quality of contents) and provide opportunities to citizens to scrutinise the government both in terms of performance and comply to the rule of law (procedural quality) (Ibid; 22).

[17] For an extensive assessment of each of these dimension see also Beetham et all (2008), Roberts (2005), Bühlmann e al. (2008).

[18] Accordingly, the rule of law acts as containment and limitation of the exercise of state power (Beetham et al. 2008; 56).

[19] As claimed by Morlino and Diamond (2004), "even if everyone's formal rights of participation are upheld, inequalities in political resources can make it harder for lower-status individuals to exercise those rights." (Ibid; 24)

[20] With vertical accountability is meant the possibility for voters to request the explanation of political decisions and it is characterised by the possibility to get informed, and to punish or compensate governments with the electoral vote.

[21] Responsiveness resembles vertical accountability in that it concerns citizen satisfaction with official actions (policy-making) (Beetham et al, 2008).

[22] Competition refers to the possibility in a political system to have regular, free and fair electoral competitions between different political forces/parties. Competition, by guaranteeing free and fair election hold elected representative accountable (Sartori 1987).

Hence, while the rule of law, by ensuring equality before the law and therefore horizontal accountability, is a crucial condition for political competition and participation, these latter act as conditions for vertical accountability[23]. The possibility and ability of citizens to monitor and question official actions also requires freedom, equal access to political participation and the rule of law as guarantor of such rights.

1.1.4 Applying the 'quality of democracy'

Although there is not such a thing as a perfect democracy as there is not a democratic system able to score high on every and each of the dimensions discussed above, the present research aims not so much at questioning whether or not in Italy and in Catania the political system before or after the crisis of the early 1990s was democratic but rather at assessing the quality of democracy both at national and local level. Yet, while at national level, this will be carried out by reviewing the relevant literature, at local level, it will be essential to establish first how the clientelistic governance of the city affected the quality of democracy and subsequently if the reforms of the local governments alone led to a transition towards a more competitive and programmatic system.

For this purpose, it necessary to determine if the reforms have increased or decreased the possibility for citizens to equally exercise some form of control over the local government and public policies (vertical accountability) and equally participate in the discussion of such policies. Second, if the reforms have improved or worsened the local government capacity to satisfy citizen aggregate demands and collective needs and if not, whether or not citizens had alternative political options (competition). Third, if the post-crisis period saw an increase or

[23] Similarly Morlino (2010) argues that "while the various aspects of the rule of law provide the grounds for accountability by citizens and other entities, the presence of genuine accountability promotes improvements in the legal system and respect for the law. The rule of law is also an essential premise for responsiveness, which, in turn, is an important pre-condition for evaluating accountability" (Ibid; 219).

decrease in the local judicial and institutional system ability to scrutinize the political power and punish its abuses (horizontal accountability).

1.2 Research subject and background: the Italian First Republic and its crisis

1.2.1 The Italian partitocracy

When in March 1994 Silvio Berlusconi was elected Italian Prime Minister for the first time many spoke about the birth of the Italian Second Republic and the end of a short but exceptionally intense political, institutional and economic crisis. In a little more than two years the entire political system that had governed the country for the previous 45 years collapsed under a multitude of pressures giving way to a period of transition during which new political parties arose and new electoral roles were established. However, whereas both the rapidity and intensity of these events caught many by surprise, given the many flaws of that democratic system, its collapse could alternatively be seen as a predictable outcome.

Accordingly, the first feature was the exceptional (Calise, 1978) power held by political parties formed during the post-war period which produced what many defined as a partitocracy (*partitocrazia*). By substituting the traditional role of mediators that parties should hold with that of 'unregulated regulators' (Pasquino, 1989), Italian parties began to compete with each other to enlarge their grip over state institutions, the economy and society. Using this control they promoted affiliation over meritocracy in the allocation of public posts (Fabbrini, 2009; Golden, 2010) and in this way substituted the principles of impartiality and universality that bureaucratic and administrative decisions should follow with discriminatory criteria (Revelli, 1996). Ultimately, control over public authorities and resources became the major appeal adopted, first and foremost by the Dc but also by the other parties, to gain electoral support. This appeal, especially in the south, was organised via an extensive spoil

and clientelistic system that favoured the development of public and publically assisted economic sectors at the expense of economic modernisation (Trigilia, 2016)[24].

In this party-centred system, the Dc exercised a 'soft hegemony' (Tarrow, 1990); while the party led each and every government during the First Republic given the Pci's exclusion from central government dictated by the Cold War's ideological divide[25], it had, however, to negotiate and share power with numerous others small parties within a highly proportional electoral system. This blend resulted into a series of short lived and unstable governments that were formed and fell as a result of 'pluralistic bargaining' (Hine, 1993) carried on within the parties' apparatuses rather than through parliamentary debates[26]. Thus, the parties' electoral stability[27] corresponded to a high level of government instability[28] (Bull and Newell, 1996-2005) that along with the lack of power alternation adversely affected the quality of democracy in the country[29].

By the late 1970s parties began to take part more and more frequently in corrupt exchanges to extract extra resources to invest in their spoil and clientelistic systems. This was paralleled by the rise of Bettino Craxi's Psi which, thanks to an electoral weakening of both the Dc and Pci, with only a 15% share of votes, became the arbiter of political life (Gundle, 1996) during the 1980s. Whereas the new Socialist leader promised to fight the inadequacies

[24] As will be discussed in chapter 5, in Catania the public sector was artificially expanded and transformed into a major clientelistic apparatus at the expense of any industrial development in the city.
[25] As will be discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.1), with the so-called *convention ad excludendum*, the Pci, the second biggest party both in terms of electoral support and organisation, was considered anti-systemic and therefore was permanently banned from central government.
[26] Parliament was indeed transformed into an 'empty shell' where what had already been decided by parties in covert negotiations was ratified.
[27] In this respect, the Dc did not see any electoral decline until the early 1980s and its government allies did not see any electoral increase. Such party stability provided the former with its long-lasting dominant position within government coalitions.
[28] From 1948 to 1992 fifty different governments were formed and brought down with the shortest lasting just 22 days (Fanfani I) and the longest lasting 1093 (Craxi I).
[29] As will be highlighted in chapter 3, government stability and the parties' covert negotiations undermined both the level of responsiveness and accountability.

of the partitocratic system, in reality his party became an integral part of this and a brutal competitor in the fight for spoils (McCarthy, 1995).

By the end of the 1980s, Italian partitocracy had reached a critical point. The parties' permanent need of resources forced governments to increase the annual spending deficit (Pacquino in McCarthy, 2000) with inevitable detrimental costs for the public economy. Besides, permanent government instability had hampered long-lasting reforms leaving social and economic transformations ungoverned (Crainz, 2012). Yet, in a vicious circle, the shortcomings of the partitocratic system were erroneously solved with more partitocracy (Sassoon, 2008) thus inevitably perpetuating and exacerbating the country's weaknesses.

1.2.2 The demise of the system

It is on the basis of such fault lines that some authors (Allum, 1993; Revelli, 1996; Bull and Rhode, 1997; Crainz, 2012; Santomassimo, 2011) describe the Italian crisis as a predictable outcome. Surely, as stressed by Ginsborg (2001), one should not adopt a deterministic approach, yet it is still plausible to assume that as the partitocratic system was unable to correct its failings it was presumably more exposed to internal or external calls for change. By the early 1990s these demands suddenly materialised in a simultaneous course of events that revealed the failings of Italian democracy and ended its party-centred political system.

By distinguishing between endogenous and exogenous pressures, old and new critical issues and structural and conjunctural factors (Bull and Rhode, 2007), authors have indicated four major causes of the crisis. Accordingly, the system was first undermined by the end of Communism in Eastern Europe epitomised by the fall of the Berlin's Wall in 1989. This was followed by the transformation of the Pci into a non-Communist party of the left[30] which

[30] During the Pci National Congress in Bologna (November 1989) it was started a process of transformation of the Pci, nicknamed 'Svolta della Bolognina' (Bolognina turning point),that will end by the beginning of 1991 with the formation of the Pds.

crucially ended the anti-communist role played by the ruling parties, especially the Dc, and left many voters with no further reason to support them.

At the same time, though, the system's authority was seriously undermined by the need to respect the economic parameters[31] prescribed in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. This, in fact, forced the governing parties to raise taxation and cut public spending (Crainz, 2012) when their electoral legitimacy had until then been largely based on a generous distribution of resources and a flexible approach to tax evasion (Sassoon, 2008). This provided the electoral body with another reason to cease supporting the political system and tolerating its inefficiency along with the corruption of its class.

Such tolerance also ended within the judicial system which, given the weakening of the governing parties, initiated a sort of 'legal revolution' (Nelken, 1996) that spread from Milan with an 'emulative effect' (Sberna and Vannucci, 2013) all over the country. After decades of political impediments, prosecutors were finally able[32] to trigger a virtuous circle (Della Porta, 2001) that revealed how broadly corruption had pervaded every level of the political system. The so-called *Clean Hand* (in Italian *Mani Pulite*) anti-corruption campaign not only put thousands of people under investigation, including local and national politicians, entrepreneurs and public administrators but, more crucially, it involved the most well-known and high-profile individuals belonging to that 'political oligarchy' until then considered untouchable (Ginsborg, 2001).

[31] These concerned a budget deficit no higher than 3% of GDP and a public debt no higher than 60% of GDP; Italy by the end of the 1980s largely violated both of these parameters.

[32] As some authors (Koff and Koff, 2000; Bull and Newell, 2005) stress, the end of the 'ideological divide' set the magistrates free to investigate the governing parties without the risk of favouring anti-system ones such as the Pci.

Last but not least, the system was further challenged by referendum campaigns aimed at reducing government instability by replacing the proportional electoral system with a two coalition one that could boost stability and accountability[33].

The crumbling of the old political parties corresponded to the de-radicalisation of the Pci and the Msi and the rise of new appeals such as the *regionalism* of the Northern League (*Lega Nord*), the *anti-communist liberalism* of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and the anti-mafia struggle embodied by *La Rete* (the Net).

This latter party was the political organisation of a civic rebellion against the mafia that had risen in Palermo during the mid-1980s in support of the city's anti-mafia judicial pool. By the early 1990s, the investigations of this anti-mafia campaign left many *Mafiosi* permanently behind bars and with a political system no long able to protect their impunity (Dickie, 2004), *Cosa Nostra* launched a terrorist campaign against the Palermo pool further weakening the already precarious relationship between the state and southern civil society (Bull and Newell, 2005) and forcing the former to an unprecedented reaction (Parthdge, 1998).

Under these many pressures Italian partitocracy could not survive, leaving what many hoped would be room for an effective reform of the system.

1.3 Research relevance: the need of a local perspective on the crisis

1.3.1 Central vs local setting

Undoubtedly the crisis of the early 1990s has remained until now the most intense turmoil in the history of the Italian Republic and a key landmark for anyone investigating developments over the last 25 years whether in terms of politics, economy or society. Yet, as mentioned above, across the extensive academic debate on the crisis there has been no

[33] The new electoral system, known as the Mattarella Law (from the name of its originator) was in reality a quasi-bipolar system in that 75% of the members of parliament were elected by a majoritarian system and the remaining 25% by a proportional one.

attempt to explore and explain it from a specific local setting. On the contrary, given the institutional changes enacted by the reforms of the local governments previously discussed, to fully appreciate the extent of the political transformations of those years national scale analyses need to be supported by local-scale ones.

Besides, as claimed by Shin and Agnew (2008), in fact, the way people vote and change their voting behaviour is shaped by local 'social processes of learning and everyday experience'[34]; this in turn determines the way political power is organised and exercised. Accordingly, it can be implied that the way the old political parties used to exercise their exceptional power, the causes that triggered their crisis and the way the new parties obtained support may differ across different geographical areas and can, therefore, be fully understood if these differences are taken into account.

In this respect, this research seeks to distinguish and compare between a macro context of the crisis, national scale analysis, and a micro one, empirical investigation.
In sociology, the debate about the distinction and relationship between a macro and micro level is surely a fundamental one. In broad terms, while the former deals with high-level entities such as state, organisation, culture and society, the latter focuses on "what people do, say, and think in the actual flow of momentary experience" (Collins; 1983; 984)[35], so to recover and examine those human details and social contexts that more general analysis do not grasp and appreciate. By assessing how social reality are constructed from below, microsociology embraces interpretative, phenomenological and hermeneutical researches (Schützeichel; 2021) which are developed through ethnographic, experimental or linguistic methodologies and analyses (Scheff, 2007).

[34] Accordingly, the authors claim: "parties pick up votes in some places and lose them elsewhere, with considerable variance in 'swing' from place to place. Places change their relative political complexion with respect to who votes for whom and why" (Ibid; 7).
[35] Similarly, Schützeichel (2021) claims that "microsociology deals with the social processes of structure formation in elementary interactive relationships" (Ibid; 231).

Yet, as claimed by Manzo (2015), while there is some forms of agreement on this characterisation, there has been an extended debate on the way this two levels may be interconnected; accordingly, some have given priority to the way social and institutional factors transform individual beliefs and actions, others, on the contrary, to the way individuals' actions and drives shapes the macro-structure and developments[36].

A solution to this problem can be found by substituting the notion of level with the one of scale. As suggested by Ylikoski (2014), while the verticality implicit in the former posits questions on why a social norm should be considered higher in status than an individual belief, with the horizontality implicit in the latter the macro differs in size but it is at the same level of the micro[37].

Besides, by chancing the guiding metaphor from level to scale, it also possible to extend the notion of micro from individual to groups and institutions. "A consequence of this approach is that it permits the idea that there is no unique micro level in the social sciences. The traditional contrast between 'individual' and 'social' levels is categorical, but the contrast between small and large scale is relative. The micro and macro can be of different sizes: depending on the application, the micro entities could be individuals, families, firms, or groups" (Ibid; 122)[38].

Thus, given the temporal distance from the events examined here[39], an analysis of the crisis of the early 1990s in Catania cannot be based on the observation and interpretation of the actions, pattern of behaviour and web of relationships between individual political,

[36] Besides, some have recognised the distinction as merely analytical others have given to it an ontological foundation.

[37] Similarly, Latour (1999), explaining his 'actor-network theory', claims that the social domain is flat and folded and rather than being made of level it is characterised by circulations between different scales

[38] Accordingly, the author claims that " Social scientists also regard the micro-macro contrast as context-relative: whether an attribute is a macro or micro property depends on what it is contrasted with. A friendship relationship is a macro property from a psychological point of view, but a micro property when considered from the point of view of the social networks within a community. According to the scale view, the contrast between micro and macro depends on one's explanatory interests, not on a priori considerations" (Ibid 122).

[39] For a discussion of the temporal period examined see section 1.5

economic and social actors. Yet, it is still possible to treat the local institutions and organisations as the micro scale to compare and link with the macro scale represented by the national ones. By doing so, and following Ylikoski (2014), it is also possible to grasp what shape the central political system, macro-scale unit, took in the Sicilian city, micro-scale unit, during the First and Second Republic and to evaluate the reasons behind such developments[40].

1.3.2 Catania: a disadvantaged point of view

In analysing the Italian crisis Paul Ginsborg (2001) stresses its 'complex and often contradictory nature' in that it involved not only the political sector but also the economic, judicial, social and media ones. According to the English author, such complexity could be observed from specific 'vantage points'; in Milan the crisis took the shape of the anti-corruption campaign against the old political class; in the Bank of Italy in Rome it involved a race against the clock to ratify the Maastricht Treaty and in Palermo 'a desperate fight against Mafia power'[41]. Yet, while the spotlights were focussed on these major scenarios, nobody noticed the more peripheral but no less important ones. Just a few kilometres away from the Sicilian capital city and the massacre of its anti-mafia pool, Catania can provide an alternative vantage point from which to observe and understand the crisis.

Catania, the second largest Sicilian city[42], perfectly embodies the status of a big and backward southern Italian urban centre[43]. Traditionally at the button of the annual national

[40] In this respect, again Ylikoski (2014), to explain the link between micro and macro-scale, distinguishes between constitutive explanations, which deals with what makes a given unit have given features, and causal explanations, which deals with the way such unit acquired such features (ibid; 124).

[41] Moreover, the author mentions the neo-localist rebellion against the central state in Rome orchestrated and led by the Northern league in Lombardy and Veneto.

[42] Located on the east coast of Sicily, Catania is one of the ten largest cities in the country with a population of over 300.000 in the city and of over 700.000 in the metropolitan area (see http://www.gurs.regione.sicilia.it/Gazzette/g07-23/g07-23-p27.html.).

[43] As reported by the Catania Chamber of Commerce (*Camera di Commercio)* Report (2009), Catania is defined by the CENSIS (*Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali*) as still characterised by socio-economic backwardness, on the one hand, and a high population density, on the other.

ranking for quality of life[44], the city, with an industrial development that was never realised, an economic market largely fuelled by public resources and a pre-capita GDP a third of the national average, has never overcome its backwardness. Critical levels of unemployment, inadequate urban infrastructure and services, low levels of wealth, savings and household consumption, widespread social and housing deprivation are just some of those unresolved issues that still affect the city.

Yet, as claimed above, Catania has remained largely unscrutinised in respect of the periods before, during or after the crisis of the early 1990s. An exception, however, is the remarkable investigation made by Mario Caciagli (1977) in his "*Democrazia Cristiana e Potere nel Mezzogiorno*" on the local Dc from its development as a mass party during the 1950s and 1960s to its dominant position within the city's political system during the 1960s and 1970s.

According to the Sicilian author, the partitocratic system in Catania took the shape of a Dc regime that governed the city for over four decades via widespread clientelism. The local Christian Democrats, in fact, converted their party into a mass clientelistic one[45], giving way to a 'fake modernization process' in which new forms of mobilization (the mass party) were exploited to expand old clientelistic practices. In line with the central party system, the local Dc took over and controlled the majority of the city's public offices and resources in order to centre its appeal on an electoral distribution of social and economic benefits. This, as will be explored in chapter 5, determined the composition of the local economic market in favour of those publically assisted sectors under the control of political leaders[46] and fragmented the

[44] The most famous of these rankings is the one carried out by the national daily business newspaper, *Il Sole 24 ore,* on the quality of life in hundreds of Italian cities.

[45] As explained by Caciagli and Mattina (1979), unlike the traditional mass party, a mass clientelistic party is mainly a channel for the distribution of benefits characterised by a lack of political activities or mobilization except around the party's electoral activities and management of power.

[46] Besides, both findings and secondary sources of information stress that during the 1980s party clientelism linking political power to local institutions and society corresponded, on the one hand, to a system of corruption

local political system into competing factions for the control over offices and resources at the expense of governmental stability in the council[47] and long-term administrative plans.

Therefore, given that the partitocratic system in Catania was essentially a clientelistic one, to examine its crisis it is first necessary to briefly establish what it is meant by clientelistic politics, especially when compared with policy-oriented (Kunsche, 2014)[48] or programmatic (Roniger, 2004) politics, and consequently, how clientelism affect the quality of democracy as well as the way politics, economy and society are organised and interlinked.

1.3.3 Was there a transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics?

Generally, clientelism is defined as a dyadic (patron-clients) or triadic (patron-brokers-clients) asymmetrical, personalised and informal relationship between a patron and a client who reciprocally and voluntary exchange political support with a broad variety of benefits[49]. Taking that as given, a first factor stressed by the Weberian tradition (Muno, 2010) is the asymmetry of such a relationship in that powerless clients can access benefits exclusively through the mediation of powerful patrons. Second, the relationship is personal as patrons deliver benefits according to particularistic[50] rather than universalistic criteria to clients who offer personal loyalty and/or affiliation. Finally, clientelistic exchanges are ruled by uncodified and therefore informal rules that nonetheless determine models of social

linking the political elite with a restricted cartel of entrepreneurs, and on the other, to a system of collusion linking the latter with the local *Cosa Nostra* clan.

[47] Like the central government, the city's government was exceptionally unstable. Between 1947 and 1993, 29 mayors were elected and dismissed by the parties behind the city council.

[48] The authors express this difference as the one between a political system based on expectations with regard to policies and a political system in which clientelistic expectations prevail. Smilarly, Roniger (2004) defines clientelism as "a strategy of partial political mobilization that differs from more universal patterns, such as programmatic appeals" (Ibid; 354).

[49] Mainly these benefits can be either a permanent or temporary job, career advancement in the public sector or a service provided by public authorities.

[50] The distribution is 'particularistic' in that it exclusively favours party members along with those voters who support the party (Caciagli and Mattina, 1979; Muno 2012).

practices and cultural habits and in that "gain their relevance through their factual impact" (Muno, 2012)[51].

Contrary to the Weberian tradition some studies have adopted an instrumentalist approach according to which the client conforms to their obligation only when they are monitored and/or only when they believe they will gain a concrete benefit from the exchange (Stokes, 2005, 2007 cited in Lawson and Greene, 2014; 3).

Yet, cross-national ethnographic studies have proved the existence in clients of a 'psychological mechanism of reciprocal obligation' which persists even in the absence of monitoring (secret ballot) and/or of immediate benefits. "One implication is that clientelism may be much more entrenched than existing analyses would lead us to believe and will not necessarily disappear once ballot secrecy is enforced, as long as politicians have access to discretionary resources" (Ibid; 62).

This last point seems to suggest that the availability of resources is a key factor for the integrity of any clientelistic system. A reduction would, in fact, affect the ability of political patrons to appeal to clients so that the former "sleep peacefully as long as they can assure continuity in the clientele's remuneration" (Panebianco, 1988; 40)[52].

As emphasized by some authors (Roniger, 2004; Volinturu 2010; Kusche, 2013; Garcia, 2015), a first wave of studies (1960s-1970s) on clientelism adopting a socioeconomic approach described it as a phenomenon characterising backward or developing societies which, however, would disappear once economic modernization is achieved. By contrast though, this "prophecy of self-defeat turned out to be false. Clientelism persisted in developed countries as well as less developed ones, disregarding the system of rule"

[51] The author, who adopts Practice Theory to explore clientelism as an informal institution, stresses that it is able to promote uncodified practices, interactions, shared knowledge orders, symbolic systems and cultural code.
[52] According to Panebianco (1988), in fact, a reduction in resources can trigger an 'authority crisis' as patrons, who closely rely on those resources to supply their lack of social presence, are unable to satisfy their clients' demands.

(Volinturu, 2010; 24). Accordingly, clientelism has proved to be capable of evolving into more complex and diffused dynamics[53] and, crucially for this research, of determining political and socio-economic transformations (Mattina, 2007).

Besides, an additional wave of studies have sought to identify those institutional systems that more often than others support the development of clientelism. Within this approach, it has been claimed that in Italy party clientelism was favoured by the expansion of the welfare system and state intervention into the economy during the 1960s (Hopkin, 2002) along with an electoral system based on preference votes (Golden, 2010). While the former was seen as a further incentive for candidates to compete with each other via clientelistic exchanges (Pacquino and Parisi, 1979), the expansion of state intervention provided patrons with those resources to allocate for their election.

Thus, in regard to Catania, if one takes into account both the cut in public spending dictated by the Maastricht Treaty and the electoral and institutional reforms of the local governments called for by the referendums of those years, it is possibly to test whether such transformations led to a 'turning point' from the way the local party system had governed the city in the previous four decades that is whether or not the crisis triggered the transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics[54] among those who govern and from clients to citizens (Lawson and Greene, 2012)[55] among those who are governed.

1.4 Research aims and questions

1.4.1 Aims

[53] As will be discussed in chapter 5 in regard to Catania, an example of such an ability to evolve is the transition from the clientelism of the Old Notables to one of mass clientelistic parties which occurred by the end of the 1950s (see also Graziano, 1977; Cacigli and Mattina, 1979; Hopkin, 2002; Darabout, 2010).

[54] This is also expressed by Trigilia (2005) as the transition from politics to policies.

[55] As stressed by the authors, regardless of institutional reforms, this passage can occur only if 'citizen come to view clientelist transactions as illegitimate, feel obliged to vote according to their conscience, or come to view their patrons' largesse as a right rather than an obligation that must be repaid with political loyalty" (Ibid; 28).

- As shown in the matrix below (subsection 1.4.1), a first aim is to establish the 'quality of democracy' (Lijphart, 1994; Morlino, 2002) during the First Republic both at national level (literature review) and at the local one (empirical investigation).
- The second aim is to design an explanatory model in order to reveal the relationship between those anomalies/causes discussed above and identify their differing impact. At the same time, though, the research focus will be to explore how the central and local system reacted to the crisis, trying to separate those who called for a change of course from those who resisted such a change.
- Finally, the research aims to examine the crisis's outcome, namely the so-called Second Republic. This will be done by comparing the new regime with the old in terms of quality of democracy so to ultimately establish whether or not the crisis can be considered an authentic turning point or rather a process of adjustment.

1.4.2 Research Questions

❖ ***Before the crisis***

- Did the mass clientelistic parties compromise the 'quality of democracy' in Catania?
- What impact did clientelism have on the city economic market and social composition and on the electoral culture and behave of local voters?

❖ ***During the crisis***

- Which, among the causes/anomalies indicated by the literature, did trigger the crisis of the partitocratic system in the Sicilian city?
- Which actors/institutions did analyse/diagnose 'what went wrong', which did formulate a 'request for change' and which ones resisted such request?

❖ ***After the crisis***

- Was the crisis of the early 1990s an 'authentic' turning point from the past?

- Did the collapse of the mass clientelistic parties and , more importantly, the reform of the local government open a ‘window of opportunity’ to improve the ‘quality of democracy’ in the city?
- Did the crisis enacted the transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics along with the one from clients to citizens?

1.5 Research approach, procedure and structure

1.5.1 A multi-disciplinary approach

Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of the Italian crisis, this research could not but adopt a multi-disciplinary approach. Accordingly, given that the crisis was triggered by institutional, ideological, economic, judicial and social factors, in order to explain it a combination of fields of research as diverse as political science, political economy, sociology and criminology has to be made. While some aspects of the crisis such as, for instance, the end of the ideological divide or the referendum campaigns, can be examined from a solely political science perspective, to fully appreciate the restorative role played by the judicial power or the brutal one played by the Sicilian mafia, a support from the criminological field of inquiry is necessary. Similarly, in order to examine the relationship between the political power, the economy and society, whether at national or local level, one cannot only focus on the institutional or political realm but needs to explore also issues belonging to the political economy and sociological one.

At the same time, though, two further choices need to be made regarding which subject areas and which period of time to include in the analysis. While, given the different dimensions of the crisis, it would be tempting to include a wide range of subject areas, this would inevitably give to the research a mere descriptive profile at the expense of the level analysis and quality of explanations. Thus. given the exceptional power hold by the partitocratic system over both the economy and society, here the focus is, both in terms of

literature review and empirical investigation, not only on the political and institutional sphere but also on the economic and social one and more crucially on the way these dimension were interlinked.

In terms of temporal frame, while the crisis lasted just a few years (1992-1994), the research aims to include both the period before, in order to examine what Ginsborg (2001) defines as its 'warning signs', and the period after so to identify its outcomes. As stressed by Bull and Newell (2005), in fact, to explain rather than merely describe an analytical 'moving target' such as a crisis one has to look at its 'roots' that is at the norm/system that came before it[56] so as to be able also to identify those level of continuity and discontinuity with what came after[57]. Hence, apart from the early 1990s, the research will look first at the development of the partitocratic system between the 1960s and 1970s and at its degeneration during the 1980s, and then at the emergency of the so-called Second Republic during the end of the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium.

1.5.2 Research procedures

In light of the choices above discussed, the research will proceed according to the analytical matrix below. A first stage of analysis will look at the political, economic and social areas of inquiry, along with their connections, during the period before the crisis; consequently, the focus will be on the course of the crisis and therefore on the causes that questioned the integrity of the First Republic and on the reactions such events triggered both at the political, economic and social level. Finally, the analysis will look at the consequences of the crisis, that is at the re-organisation of the political system during the so-called Second republic.

[56] In this respect, Roitman in her *Anti-Crisis* (2014) argues that 'evoking crisis entails reference to a norm because it requires a comparative state for judgement: crisis compared to what?" (Ibid; 4).
[57] Accordingly the author questions "how is it possible to capture and explain a 'moving target' such as a 'transition' without knowledge of what went before?" (Ibid; 2)

Analytical areas (Vertical) – Temporal dimension (Vertical)

	Before	***During***	***After***
Politics			
Economy			
Society			

1.5.3 Research structure

In line with the analytical approach adopted, the research structure is divided in two parts both organised according to the before-during-after the crisis scheme; the literature review, apart from the analysis of the notion of crisis, focuses at the national level, the empirical study at the local one. Accordingly:

Chapter 2 aims first to reveal the meanings of the term crisis through a review of Reinhart Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis* (1988), Burckhardt's *Reflexion on History* (1943) and his distinction between authentic and fake crisis and, second. to narrow down the focus by briefly providing a definition of democracy and then explore how and why this can enter into crisis and what consequences can follow.

Chapter 3 seeks to provide a critical review of literature on the Italian First Republic and its crisis through an assessment of older and more recent academic accounts. Thus section 3.1 will try to establish what kind of democracy the Italian partitocracy was in order to subsequently individuate those anomalies that provoked its end. In this regards, section 3.2 aims first to design an 'explanatory model' to determine which of the events above mentioned had a major and/or minor impact on the old partitocratic system. Second, the chapter, by exploring the transition from the old to the new party and electoral system, aims to assess whether the post-crisis period saw an increase in the quality of democracy.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological approach chosen to conduct the case study. Due to the small number of academic accounts relating to Catania, it was decided to adopt both descriptive and explanatory qualitative methods in order to obtain sets of information, otherwise unavailable, and interpretative frameworks. The chapter describes in details the research design, sampling strategy, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 mirroring chapter 3, provides a description and explanation of the findings regarding the partitocratic system in the city of Catania. Accordingly to the analytical matrix discussed above, the focus will first be on the local political system in order to indicate similarities with and differences from the central one. Then the chapter will explore the relationships local parties had with the city's institutional and economic system and with society.

Chapter 6 focuses on what findings suggested with regard to the cause and course of the crisis at local level in order to reveal which anomalies undermined local partitocracy. Then attention will be given to which reactions were triggered by the fall of the local system in political, economic and social terms.

Chapter 7 concludes the empirical part by examining the outcome of the crisis at local level in order to establish the level of continuity and/or discontinuity between the old and new democratic regime so that it can be determined whether or not the crisis has been a turning point and whether it increased or reduced the quality of democracy in the city.

Chapter 8, after a brief thematic summary of the findings, will look first at the research theoretical implications and subsequently at its limitations. As discussed in section 1.3.1 , given that the partitocratic system in the south was largely a clientelistic one, the chapter aims to reveal what the findings suggest with regard to this type of politics and its effect on the quality of democracy.

Chapter 2

Crisis; an unsolved starting point

2.0 Introduction: exploring the concept of crisis

As claimed in chapter 1, the crisis of the Italian First Republic has been the subject of much analysis and numerous interpretations. However, among these latter, a general common point among authors is the frequent use of the word 'crisis'. But, what is a crisis? Or in other words, beyond specific crises, is it possible to define the term *per se*?

It seems that to adopt crisis as an analytical starting point comes with some risks as it is not a straight forward concept to define , but, rather, as Robinson (1968) claims "a lay term in search of scholarly meaning" (quoted in Lagadec, 1993; 25). This is confirmed by its frequent appearance in many forms of narrative adopted to describe contemporary situations (Roitman, 2014), often without questioning what precisely it is meant with it[58].

Yet the term 'crisis' has a long history which originated in the religious language of Ancient Greece, (*Krisis*)[59] where it possessed two precise meanings that were the basis of subsequent developments of the term: that of analysis/diagnosis and that of decision/choice. Whereas the former refers to the epistemological process through which a given crisis is comprehended, the latter regards those options to choose so to overcome the crisis.

This chapter will design a framework through which the origins, developments and consequences of the political crisis of the early 1990s in Italy, and more importantly in Catania, can be examined. Accordingly, section 2.1 examines Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history of crisis (1988)[60] so that some initial points can be established while

[58] This point is also claimed by Morlin (1976 quoted in Lagadec, 1993; 25-26) who, attempting to develop his crisiology, claims that while the original meaning of the term crisis is also decision, due to its widespread use the term often signify situation where indecision and uncertainty prevails.

[59] Krísis (κρίσις) – meaning: decision, choice, judgment.

[60] See also Koselleck and Richter (2006) *Crisis* Journal of the History of Ideas 67 (2); pp. 357-400

section 2.2 will look at the distinction between 'authentic' and 'fake' crises suggested by Burckhardt in his *Reflexion on History* (1943) so to be able to recognise, among the many misuses of this term, when an effective crisis actually occurred and which are is intrinsic features.

Equipped with these analytical tools, the chapter will finally narrow the focus towards the subject of this research by exploring (section 2.3) what a crisis in a democratic system involves and if and why some democracies may result more exposed and therefore more fragile than others to this type of turmoil. This will be achieved by first attempting a definition of democracy which includes the ways it can function to then turn the attention to what can trigger a crisis in a democratic system, the way this can develop and what consequences can follow from it.

2.1 The temporal dimension of Crisis

While the term crisis has been used more and more as an analytical point of departure, there has been little attempt to trace its semantic development; one exception is the work of Reinhart Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis* (1988). In his historical re-enactment, the German author claims that the original meanings attached to the term 'crisis', rather than being substituted with others when adopted in different fields of research or in different historical periods, have expanded as a 'net of meanings'.

According, he points out the use of this term in the medical language of the Hippocratic School (*Corpus Hippocratum*) where it signified a 'turning point/sudden alteration' in the course of a disease that can lead to both a favourable or unfavourable development; yet, the crisis is not the disease *per se*, but rather the 'breaking point' that requires analysis/diagnose and decision/judgement in the balance between life and death

(Roitman, 2014; 15-16)[61]. Such initial meanings were subsequently adopted into social and political discourses to indicate a point in time where "a decision is due but has not yet been taken" (Koselleck, 2006; 361) and also in judicial ones where it signifies the interpretation of events on the basis of mere evidences, as in the Greek tragedy or judgement before God within the teleological promise of salvation that shapes a future historical time found in the Old Testament[62].

Yet, Koselleck argues that in the eighteen century crisis was converted in a 'philosophy of history' in that the eschatological expectation of the Last Judgement was translated into the idea of an imminent historical progress. As suggested by Roitman (2009), this 'post-theological' mode transformed time from a medium in which historical events take place to a dimension with an historical quality *per se*[63]. Events were no longer understood through prophecy and expectation, but rather by way of a prognosis of historical time[64]. Within this development Koselleck describes the distinction, originating in the late eighteen century, between morality and politics on which the new bourgeois public's critique was based. The moral sphere then became, "*a private inner space as the natural site* for the formulation of critique - the all too familiar moral or ethical subject" (Roitman, 2014; 26) which is what Koselleck identifies as the 'apolitical politics' of the Enlightenment. The conquest of a space for critique gave rise to the prevailing of reason over state authority and

[61] Besides, as Koselleck claims, "crisis also meant 'decision' in the sense of reaching a verdict or judgement… Thus in classical Greek the subsequent separation into two domains of meaning—that of a ''subjective critique'' and an ''objective crisis''—were still covered by the same term" (Koselleck, 2006; 259).

[62] The author argues in fact that in the Jewish and Christian tradition, the term is linked to the idea of God's judgement and therefore assumes the meaning of 'promise of salvation' and expectation of the Last Judgment. Besides, as stressed by Roitman (2014): "The experience of this temporal differentiation between past and future generates a concomitant differential between experience and expectation – the source of crisis" (Ibid; 17).

[63] As the author of *Anti-Crisis* claims in fact, "crisis serves this transposition from prophecy to diagnosis because it becomes the basis for claims that one can interpret the entire course of history via a diagnosis of time" (Ibid;18).

[64] The historical meanings of events are in Koselleck's terms an "epochal conscience" in respect to which a crisis is a 'turning point', an immanent transition that brings transformations.

to the social demand for moral and historical progress[65] that would take the shape of "a complete and total liberation of human being from human rule" (Koselleck, 2002; 250)[66]. Ultimately, however, this very inner space for critique is brought into question in the nineteen century (Koselleck, 2006) when reason, until this point used as a way to escape contingency, is itself regarded as a contingent method of judgement. Within this perspective, a crisis forces critical thought to reveal its limits and to enact change and transformation[67].

A key element provided by Koselleck's historical re-enactment is the temporal dimension of a crisis in that it is a 'turning point' in history, an 'extraordinary event' and/or set of events that burst into a given system undermining its normal functioning, a 'moment of true' that mirroring the present situation reveals its 'blind spots' (Roitman, 2014) and provides the possibility to hope for a different future. This also suggests that to examine a crisis one has to look first at what went into crisis so to be able to identify the causes that trigger it by a diagnose of what went wrong. Accordingly, "evoking crisis entails reference to a norm because it requires a comparative state for judgement: crisis compared to what?" (Ibid; 4). At the same time though, a crisis forces those involved to decide what changes are necessary to solve the crisis. From the link to the past, in the form of 'epochal conscience', and transition to the future, in the form of a 'moral demand for change', a crisis represents a 'moment of truth' for a given social, political and/or economic system through which its weaknesses and failings can be exposed and the incentive to overcome them can be found.

[65] Moreover, the author also stresses that crisis as a philosophy of history took the form of a hope for a better future, of an utopia that "gave the bourgeoisie the vitality and certainty needed to bring about the crisis as a moral judgement." (Koselleck, 1988; 174).

[66] Besides, as reported by the author, the term began to be use to describe the clash between monarchy and parliament and liberty and slavery and it expanded into the sphere of internal and external politics as well as economics (Ibid; 361).

[67] Accordingly, Roitman (2014) argues that for critique here is not meant the judgement between what it is and what ought to be but rather, in a Kantian conception, critique is the process that establish the limits of reason (Ibid; 34).

2.2 Authentic vs Fake Crisis

As claimed above, in order to fully grasp the causes, development and outcome of what occurred in Italy and especially in Catania by the early 1990s along with what the term crisis means and what a crisis entitles this chapter also seeks to establish whether or not those events can be considered a turning and/or breaking point from the way politics, economic and society were organised both at national and local level.

In addressing this point, a great analytical support come from the distinction suggested by Burckhardt in his *Reflexion on History* (1943) between 'authentic' and 'fake' crises. In this respect, while the Swiss historian claims that throughout history many crises have developed to the point where it is plausible to speak of 'historical crises' he also points out the rarity of 'authentic crises' in contrast to the frequency of 'fake ones'[68]. Whereas this latter are, in Burckhardt's words, "based on artificial agitation, on reading, on unjustified imitation of the wrong things, on artificial inoculation" (Ibid; 160), authentic crises erupt as a 'breaking point' triggered by the accumulation of power on the part of a single subject or group[69].

This monopolistic accumulation of power is suddenly challenged by the gathering of critical/*negative* forces, in Burckhardt's terms 'a blind coalition of force', that take the form of a protest against what is considered to be wrong about the old regime and lead to its suppression. Yet, this first negative stage of opposition, "without which, the old institutions,

[68] As the author argues in fact "genuine crises are rare. At various times, civil and religious disputes have filled the air with lasting and deafening clamour, yet without leading to vital transformation. The political and social foundations of the State were never shaken or even called into question. Hence they cannot be regarded as genuine crises" (*Ibid*; 141).

[69] "Something breaks out, subverting the public order. Either it is suppressed, whereupon the ruling power, if it is a wise one, will find some remedy, or unexpectedly to most people a crisis in the whole state of things is produced" (Burckhardt, 1943; 142). Moreover, the historian adds that "such crises, when they come to grief produce a totally different result from what was intended or imagined, bringing to light something that had long since underlain them, and that might have been seen long since, but could only be finally brought to light by a shift of power". (*Ibid*; 160)

good or bad, would continue to exist forever" (Ibid; 144) is followed by a *positive* phase embodied in "a radiant vision of the future which frustrates any cool consideration" (Ibid; 145).

A crisis, when authentic, instils into society an unexpected vitality, it is a sort of aid coming from nature and like an epidemic it eliminates the old elite and brings to the front stage individuals full of fresh energy[70]. New forces in society emerge and individuals and masses can make themselves heard as the old institutions and their restrictions are finally neutralised.

Thus, while fake crises don't shake the foundation of the system and in that do not enact changes, authentic ones trigger alteration so that there must be majors differences between what came before and what came after them. Similarly to Koelleck's notion of crisis, Buckhardt's authentic crises are 'turning points' that lead to transformation and that takes the form of a critical diagnoses of what is wrong with past and develops in the form of internal request for change and for new opportunities in order to transform the present in a different future.

2.3 Narrowing the concept of crisis towards the Italian case

Bearing in mind the above accounts, this concluding section aims to explore what can trigger a crisis in a democratic system, how its structure and functions can be affected, which institutions and actors are involved, what conflicts emerge and what consequences follow. As in other field of inquiry, also in political science, the notion of crisis is as broadly used; indeed, one could talk about the crisis of the welfare state, the crisis of political parties in

[70] "All the rest of the world's life is involved in the ferment, is implicated in the crisis in a thousand ways, friendly or hostile. It would even seem as if the crisis absorbed into itself the whole mobility of an epoch, just as other diseases decline in an epidemic, the movement hastening, slowing down, relapsing and restarting according to the main impulses operative at the moment" (Ibid; 148).

their relationship with civil society or the crisis of parliament in its relationship with other institutional realms (Merkel, 2013)[71].

According to Morlino (in Bartolini et al 1986), a crisis in a democratic regime[72] can be generated by a cluster of exogenous and/or endogenous phenomena[73] that alter the logical operation of its mechanisms, reveal its failings and affect the ordinary expression of political competition and participation in civil society. This can hamper the ability of institutional actors to respond efficiently to voter's requests, potentially leading to political conflict at the elite level with a corresponding electoral fluidity in the electorate due to governmental immobility[74].

Yet, crucially the Italian author stressed that a crisis which would lead to the collapse of a democratic regime is rarely found in western countries due to their solid and deep-rooted democratic tradition[75]. At the same time though, cases of crisis *within* democracy despite do not question the existence of the regime can equally undermine it from within leaving institutions in place but limiting their ability to operate effectively[76].

Clearly the Italian crisis of the early 1990s does belong to this former type. There is little doubt that, despite its intensity, there has not been neither sign of the collapse of democracy nor of a transition towards a more authoritarian political regime. Hence, the focus here is on those crises *within* democracy and, in this regard, two sets of aims have to be

[71] The authors stresses in fact that crisis is an intrinsic element of democracy until the point this latter would be inconceivable without the former (Ibid; 1).

[72] With 'democratic regime' the author refers to the empirical definition of those mass liberal-democratic systems that mainly developed in western Europe and are structured around a capitalistic organisation of the economy (see Ibid: 85-86).

[73] Among these the author indicates the firm or precarious level of steadiness of given democratic system along with socioeconomic transformations and an external and/or internal economic turmoil.

[74] Accordingly, a crisis can trigger a self-damaging process (in Morlino's words 'a vicious circle) as political instability and immobility causes electoral fluidity that in turns furtherly weakens the political system that again increases instability and electoral fluidity.

[75] Differently than crisis with collapse, crisis within democracy do not lead to radicalization in politics and society but they do however undermine the ability of the political power to satisfy the requested coming from society (Ibid; 127).

[76] Similarly, Merkel (2013) distinguishes between *acute crises* and *latent crises* (Ibid; 14-15).

addressed: (a) to fix the theoretical and empirical boundaries within which a definition of democracy and its function can be enclosed; (b) to identify which anomalous factors can cause a crisis *within* democracy, what reactions it can produce and what outcomes can follow.

(a) The need to formulate a definition of democracy has been at the centre of a wide ranging and long-lasting debate among authors. According to Sartori (2008), the different meanings and the ideological values that have been attached to this term impede a straight forward definition that could bridge the gap between the search for a theoretical base (what is democracy?) and its various empirical versions (how does it work?)[77]. Thus, questions on how to define democracy inevitably have to take into account both its ideal-types and, at the same time, the way it works in different forms and the social, cultural and economic conditions across countries that support that political regime.

From a normative point of view, democracy refers to both a political system and to a spectrum of principles and ideals; yet it is not explicitly identified with a specific ideology as in the case of socialist and communist regimes[78], but it can be considered as the result of the development of western society in which values such as equality, freedom and the rule of law have played a major role (Morlino in Bartolini et al, 1986)[79]. This development has followed two routes; on the one hand, the possibility for civil society to protest against authorities, and, on the other hand, the participation of civil society in political activities.

[77] As the author argues democracy can exist and be examined by keeping the balance between the normative and empirical level. Thus, whereas "democracy refers firstly to its normative definition this does not coincides with what is democracy. The democratic ideal does not defines the democratic reality" (Ibid; 2). Similarly, Hyland (1995) claims that "we cannot expect to produce a determinate account of what democracy in practice must be merely by an abstract reflection on the general idea of democracy" (Ibid; 41).

[78] Morlino (in Bartolini et al, 1986) defines these regimes as systems that while referred on a normative level to social democracy ideal-type failed to realise it on an empirical level.

[79] In this respect, again Sartori (2008) distinguishes between political democracy, based on political and judicial equality, social democracy based on social and status equality, and economic democracy promoting equal redistribution of wealth in society.

In political terms, many authors have indicated in the conformity between governmental acts and the will of those affected by those acts (government *responsiveness*) one of those key principles characterising democracy[80]. However, this would not be sufficient *per se* if the requests formulated by the citizens are not formulated autonomously[81]and if the way political decisions are taken and accomplished is illicit and/or do not conform to the principle according to which each citizen must be considered politically equal (Dahl, 1971)[82]. Within these dimensions democracy takes place in a variety of ways; thus focusing on the institutional realm, for instance, the relationship between legislative and executive power can be taken into account in order to distinguish between a *presidential*, *semi-presidential* and *parliamentary* democracy; or alternatively, focusing on the party and electoral systems a distinction can be made between majority or proportional one (Sartori, 1976).

(b) Similarly to the definition of democracy even the one regarding its crisis have been at the centre of an extensive and varied debate among authors. In this respect, according to Merkel's (2013) critical review of crisis of democracy theories, the arguments on the cause and development of crisis ranged from conservative positions which see in the increasing demands of citizens the endogenous origin of the overloaded national states and the crisis within the welfare system (Crozier, Huntington, Watanuki, 1975 quoted in Merkel, 2013; 5-7)[83], to leftist ones that see the periodic economic turmoil intrinsic to late capitalism as the

[80] In this respect, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) argue that the relevance of governmental responsiveness has increased in correspondence to the fall of ideological appeal. This latter in fact gave more room, in political competition, to those concrete and salient issues requested by the electorate (Ibid; 312).
[81] According to Sartori (2012), the autonomous and heteronomous formulation of public opinion are ideal types that can be assumed as the two opposite poles of a spectrum in which it is possible to collocate empirical cases.
[82] As the author claims, however, in order for any and each citizen to be considered equally it is necessary everyone can freely associate and participate, run for electoral offices and benefit from a pluralistic system of information.
[83] Similarly Morlino (1986) argues that crises are often triggered by the growing expectations, needs, and requests articulated by a fast-changing society in which governments provide an inadequate response due to the lack of resources or their inability to articulate and select the many requests.

exogenous cause that can trigger political and social crises (Habermas, 1975; Clarke, 1994 quoted in Merkel, 2013; 3-5)[84].

Besides, whether triggered by endogenous or exogenous causes a crisis develops across the correlations between those who govern and those who are governed in a sort of escalating process (Merkel, 2013) that see a rational impasse within state institutions as national governments are forced to find a balance between the needs for capital accumulation and the increase public spending requested from the button. In this scenario, the ability of a given government to respond will make the difference between the solution of the crisis or its worsening. In the latter case, groups in society will tend to blame political inefficiency for the economic crisis, creating space for a 'legitimation crisis' and further for a 'motivational' one (Habermas, 1975). These last two see a decrease in electoral participation along with a loss of trust in political parties and state institutions.

However, whether a crisis is generated by capitalism periodical turmoil or by increases in social demands, as claimed by Morlino (1998), its eruption and the level of changes it can trigger depend also from the way a given democracy was consolidated. Accordingly, the Italian author explains such consolidation as composed by a combination of a button-up process of legitimation and top-down one of anchoring. Yet, as the author adds, in those countries where the top-down process of anchoring is not counter-balanced by button-up one of legitimation of the system due to the presence of a weakly developed civil society, the risk for later potential crises is higher. The top-down anchoring process by itself, in fact, can create a gap between who govern and who is governed, lowering the level of responsiveness and accountability and leading to the so-called paradox of consolidation.

[84] Besides, as Merkel claims by reviewing Crouch's *Post-democracy*, according to recent developments, democracy is now in the process of being overwhelmed by a new model of post-democracy in which, unlike in the past, globalization and deregulation find no opposition in a society deprived of strong collective actions (Crouch, 2004 quoted in Merkel, 2013).

When civil society began to mature and question the legitimacy of the anchors a large scale and deep turmoil can potentially erupt (Ibid; 273).

Ultimately, a final but key factor is the level of change a crisis can determine in a given democratic system so to establish, in Burckhardt's term, its authenticity. In this respect, again Morlino (in Bartolini et al 1986) argues that a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime or from one democratic regime to another contains within it a degree of continuity. However, whereas in the first case collapse of the old system is due to the lack of self-changing norms[85], in the second case the transition from an old to a new model of democracy is achieved by modifying norms and practices that previously belonged to the old model. Whether or not there will be a high or a low level of continuity will depend on the extent of change forced on those norms and practices.

Accordingly, although a crisis can bring about changes in the distribution of institutional power between, for instance, the executive power and the parliament, or between political leader and the electorate, as one of this research's hypothesis tries to explore, lasting social and cultural patterns informing political organisation, action and decision can still reduce, if not neutralise, the margin of change and so that rather than change it is a case of restoration and/or 'adjustment' (Morlino, 2009).

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter aimed at identifying the different meanings attached to the notion of crisis so as to create a theoretical framework within which to analyse the Italian crisis of the early 1990s. Whereas this notion is increasingly employed in contemporary narrative, more often than not it is taken as an analytical starting point without questioning its meaning. In order to make up for this lack, the chapter explored the analysis of the meaning of the term

[85] Accordingly, the transition between an authoritarian and democratic regime begins when the rules of the former are not able to change according to the request for civil and political rights coming from the button. The transition can be considered concluded when the first free election take place (ibid; 110).

crisis and its evolution in history carried on by Reinhart Koselleck in his *Critique and Crisis* (1988).

In this respect, two major element vividly emerged: first, the original meanings of the term crisis, that is those of 'analysis/diagnosis' and 'decision/judgement', rather than changing have been adopted by different fields of research. From the medical language of the Hippocratic School (*Corpus Hippocratum*) to the political language of the seventeenth century, crisis signifies a 'turning point' that requires analysis and decision in the balance between life and death whether in regards to a person or a political regime. Thus, and this is the second significant element, crisis is inscribed into a temporal dimension in that it erupts as a breaking point in time forcing actors to turn to the past to examine what went wrong and to look to the future in the form of a demand and decision on how to overcome the crisis.

Yet, in order to be able to determine whether or not what occurred in Italy and in Catania by the early 1990s was actually a 'turning point' from the way democracy functioned in the country, the chapter subsequently explored the distinction between 'authentic' and 'fake' crisis proposed by Burckhardt in his *Reflexion on History* (1943). Accordingly, while fake crises are just 'an artificial agitation' that neither shake the foundation of the regime nor lead to effective change, authentic crises are rare events characterised by the accumulation of negative forces against the status quo and by a positive believe in a better and different future. When a crisis is authentic, therefore, what came before and what came after it, it has to be substantially different in that actual crises do enact processes of transformation.

Ultimately, the chapter examined the notion of democracy and its crisis so to narrow the focus towards the research topic. In this direction, according to Morlino (in Bartolini et al, 1986), a preliminary distinction has to be made between the crisis *of* democracy and the crisis *within* democracy; whereas the former indicates the collapse of a given democratic regime,

the latter, although it compromises the functioning of the system, doesn't threaten its integrity.

However, in order to examine the crisis *within* democracy it was necessary first to find a definition of democracy and its quality by keeping the balance between its ideal types and its various empirical versions (Sartori, 2012). Accordingly, in a well-functioning democracy citizens formulate their requests freely and equally, evaluate political action (accountability), and its ability to satisfy these requests (responsiveness) while abiding by the rule of law. In contrast , in a failing democracy political *accountability* and *responsiveness*, the autonomous formulation of requests and the integrity of the rule of law are affected by wide spread political fragmentation, corruption and political nepotism. Unsurprisingly, whether a crisis is caused by exogenous or endogenous factors or by a combination of these, failing democracies are less able to cope with them due to its intrinsic political and economic inefficiencies and weaknesses.

Chapter 3

The Italian First Republic and its Crisis

3.0 Introduction

A crucial suggestion arisen from chapter 2 is that whether the notion of crisis is examined in medical, military, political or socio-economic discourses, the initial analytical step to take has to regard what norm enters into crisis so to have a 'comparative state for judgment" (Roitman, 2014) with what comes after. Accordingly, a crisis within a democratic system can be explained by first focusing on this very system, the way it worked and the principles, norms and rules it followed.

Thus, before examining the events of the early 1990, it is necessary to explore the way the First Republic has been described in academic debate. In so doing, it is then possible first to detect those 'warning sights' (Ginsborg, 2001) and 'roots of the crisis' (Bull and Newell, 2005) mentioned in chapter 1, second, to point out what event or set of events triggered the crisis; third, to grasp the way this latter developed by identifying those institutions and actors who provided a diagnose of what went wrong along with those who formulated a demand for change. Ultimately and more importantly by understanding what came before the crisis it is possible to assess its outcomes in terms of continuity and discontinuity with what came after.

In line with the procedural matrix designed in chapter 1, this chapter is divided in two main parts. Accordingly, section 3.1 explores the Italian First Republic focusing on each of the analytical areas chosen for this study along with their relationship; namely politics, economy and society. Thus, the section seeks first (subsection 3.1.1) to determine how the Italian democracy was converted into a partitocracy from the 1960s and which consequences the overwhelming power hold by political party had for the quality of democracy in the country. Second (subsection 3.1.2) to examine the degeneration of the political system into a

system of widespread corruption during the 1980s and its impact on both the public and private economy. Finally (subsection 3.1.3) to grasp how the lack of governmental stability intrinsic to the partitocratic system left ungoverned (Ginsborg, 2001) the intense socio-economic transformations of the 1960s and 1980s leading to the development of distorted forms of citizenship and public morality (Crainz, 2012) that converted many social groups into accomplices rather than opponents of the partitocratic system.

Consequently, the second part of the chapter (section 3.2) will explore how within the short space of two years (1992-1994) in an 'avalanche effect' (Cafagna, 1993) both exogenous and endogenous turmoil determined the end of the so-called First Republic which unrealistically had been thought would endure for many years to come (Ginsborg, 2001). In order to do so, it will be first designed (subsection 3.2.1) an explanatory model so to establish the impact that the end of ideological divide, the process of European integration, the anti-corruption and referendum campaign had on the old regime trying also to identify their correlations. Second (subsection 3.2.2), the focus will be on the course of the crisis and on those actors and institutions that diagnosed 'what went wrong' in the Italian *partitocrazia*, those that formulated a 'moral demand' for change and those that resisted this demand. Finally (subsection 3.2.3), the section will try to determine those degrees of continuity and/or discontinuity between the old and new regime so to ultimately establish whether or not these events represented a real 'turning point' and therefore an authentic crisis.

3.1 The Italian First Republic: politics, economy and society

3.1.1 The Partitocratic system

During its 45 years, the Italian First Republic received particular attention from political scientists and sociologists due to some of its peculiarities or anomalies (Bull and Newell, 2009) that made more difficult to compare it with other western European democracies. In particular, authors refers, on the one side, to the lack of power alternation in

government due to the exclusion of the second biggest party, the Pci, following the ideological divide imposed by the Cold War[86] and, on the other side, to the overwhelming power political parties acquired over state, economy and society which led many to define the democracy in the country as a partitocracy[87].

In terms of quality of democracy, lack of power alternation clearly undermined the possibility to have political competition and with that the possibility for voters to punish governments and opt for alternative political forces at the expense of the level of responsiveness[88].

Yet, such peculiarity provided to the biggest party, the Dc, the convenient certainty of a perpetual presence in government and formidable leverage in its formation. At the same time, though, due to a highly proportional system deliberately designed by the Constitutional Assembly in an open antifascist mood, the Christian Democrats never played alone; in fact, the party had to exercise its 'soft hegemony' (Tarrow, 1989), continuously negotiating decisions and sharing power with the minor right or left-centre parties[89] to form what were, in most cases, unstable and short-living governments. The 'pluralistic bargaining' (Hine, 1993) which resulted from these precarious coalitions, the hegemonic position occupied by the Dc along with the exclusion of the Pci resulted in a variety of definitions to describe the combination of these traits; 'imperfect bipartisanship' (Galli, 1966), 'polarised pluralism'

[86] Yet, this did not preclude the possibility for the Pci to acquire local governments (see Ginsborg, 1990) and to attempt to enter the central government in the so-called 'historical compromise' of the late 1970s (see Sassoon, 1981 – Aymot, 1981)

[87] Buffacchi and Burgess (1997) stress that other commentators have opted for alternative terms such as partytocracy, partyocracy or party-power or more extreme one such as Republic of the party or hegemonic party-state (ibid; 4)

[88] As argued by Sandri et al (2012) "this lack of responsiveness interacts with other, more complex phenomena characterising Italian society, such as the high levels of distrust in political institutions and actors (particularly parties), the negative attitudes of citizens towards a very complex, often confusing and largely derogative legislation, the widespread belief that public administration is ineffective, that the judiciary is arbitrary, and the perception of endemic corruption in civil service and state institutions in general" (ibid: 264).

[89] At the same time, Pascquino (2000) stresses that the Dc had a 'dominant' position within the governmental coalitions thanks to which it "did not suffer any electoral decline while its allies were incapable of growing and challenging its role (Ibid; 73)

(Sartori, 1976a), 'centripetal pluralism' (Farneti, 1993) just to mention the most well-known ones.

Yet, lack of power alternation was accompanied by the equally peculiar and/or anomalous centrality acquired by party within the Italian democracy that, as above mentioned, became a partitocracy. What is generally meant by this term is a political regime in which parties, more than any other formal institution, mediate between state and society. Obviously, this notion is not unique to Italy; in many democracies, indeed, it is required that the most important decision on policies and selection of political actors are taken within the elected governing parties in bargaining with other parties (Pasquino, 2009). However, this type of democratic arrangement still recognises the role and independence of state authorities and social organisations and it, nevertheless, overcomes parties' interests acting as a collective subject in respect a set of pre-established rules and norms (Pizzorno, 1993).
On the contrary, the power hold by the Italian political parties, especially but not only the Dc, was correctly identified as exceptional (Calise, 1978) as it transformed them into 'unregulated regulators' (Pasquino, 1989) rather than mediators. By neutralising the role government, parliament and other state institutions should play, parties not only lowered the level of horizontal accountability that should regulate a process of check and balance between official institutions but it substituted the impartiality of bureaucratic and administrative decisions with their electoral-oriented interests (Revelli, 1996).

This development was the result of a specific strategy carried on by the Dc. Despite the party advantageous position, electoral results, excluding the success of the 1948 general elections, started to decrease at the beginning of the 1950s. It was therefore decided, under Fanfani's secretary-ship[90], that the party needed to be 'revitalised' (Ginsborg, 1990) first by

[90] Amintore Fafani was Dc secretary from 1954 until 1959. Besides, between 1954 and 1987 he was appointed five times Prime Ministers.

reducing its dependence on the mass organisation of the Church and secondly by competing with the Pci's deep-rooted territorial pervasiveness. To achieve this, the party a part from a generic anti-communist appeal, soon became to combine ideology with pragmatism, enlarging its organisation by launching massive membership campaigns[91], in particular in the south of the country, and by taking over levels of decision making within state apparatuses, public economy authorities and social organizations[92]. These two interconnected tactics were aimed at gaining support through the electoral oriented allocation of public resources, key posts in the state machine and formulation of policies (Crainz, 2009)[93]. In doing that the party formed a 'chain of solidarity' (Caciagli, 1977) with voters which in turn created a 'self-perpetuating'[94] (Sassoon, 1995) and "parallel system of social regulation which receives a double democratic legitimation: formal and informal. Informal because the majority participates in it and formal because the system is upheld electorally" (Sassoon, 2008; 135).

When these strategies were adopted by the other parties, Italian democracy became '*dominated* rather than *governed* by them' (Fabbrini, 2009)[95]. This meant that "there was no single agency, service provider, or company controlled by a public authority that was not directed by individual chosen because of their party affiliation rather than their competence. The culture of mediation and compromise helped to eliminate the idea of meritocracy from

[91] As it will be discussed in chapter 5 in regards to Catania, this membership campaign rather than aiming to mobilise the base, it was mainly carried on to reinforce certain factions within the party both at local and national level.

[92] In so doing, the Italian parties were able to exercise control over pressure groups, the bureaucratic system, through the so-called *lottizazioni* (partitions of public posts among parties) and civil society.

[93] Moreover, Fabbrini (2009) stress that the political class was in so doing composed of "the same individuals permanently holding positions of power due to the absence of competition as well as the ability to procure and distribute public resources with which to foster social consensus" (Ibid; 34).

[94] In this respect, Partridge (1998) claims that partitocracy was a self-reinforcing system in that "the more the votes a politicians could muster, the greater was his or her prestige and standing within the party. Greater prestige in the party in turn increased access to political spoils and the means of patronage (Ibid; 79).

[95] Or as alternatively Pasquino (2000) claims "*Partitocrazia* meant that the parties, in fact all of them, though to different degrees depending on their share of power, were more than governing Italy; they were suffocating some of its vital energies" (Ibid; 74).

public discourse" (Ibid; 33) so that to put affiliation before merit[96] soon became the essence of partitocracy[97].

The leverage gained by Italian political parties has been defined without exaggeration as a revolution *per se* (Revelli, 1996). Whereas there should be a balanced division of tasks between social organisations, mass parties and state institutions, this can be compromised by the domination of one over the others. Accordingly, the dominance of civil society can trigger a social revolution, that of state institutions, especially if carried or supported by the army, can lead to a coup d'état and that of political parties, as in the case of the First Republic in Italy, leads to a political revolution.

In the race to control state and society, parties produced weak and unstable governments which constantly fell as a result of internal factional struggles within the main governing parties, rather than by vote in Parliament. This latter was, on the contrary, reduced to a hollow shell where what had already been decided elsewhere was ratified. Accordingly, "real power resided in the factions' leaders and part bosses, who negotiated among themselves to distribute the position of power, from government office (such as ministerial posts) to key positions of control in the public sector" (Patridge, 1998; 69)[98].

As a result, whereas 'partitocracy' provided parties with strong electoral stability, it failed to become a strong form of 'party government' *per se* (Bull and Newell, 2005).

[96] As stressed by Burfacchi and Burgess (2001), whereas in liberal democracy the divide between personal and collective interests evokes the notion of impartiality which is taken as the cornerstone-rule for political actions and choices, Italian ruling parties favoured a discriminatory mobilization towards personal rather than collective interests, that furtherly decreased the quality of democracy in the country.

[97] In this respect, along with the structure of the Italian partitocracy, academic accounts have also focused on its political class and on the rise of the so–called 'professional politicians' (Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999; Hopkin 2002-2006). As it will be discussed in regard to Catania, these were low class individuals with poor administrative expertise who were political trained within the party itself and who acquired 'upward mobility' thanks and through their activities within and in favour of the party apparatus.

[98] Such peculiarity meant that the system was poorly transparent in that official actions and decision were taken behind the scene and this could not but affect the level of horizontal and vertical accountability.

3.1.2 The degeneration of the system

In economy terms, to enlarge their control parties deliberately expanded the public and the parastatal sectors so to select, retain and promote members in the public service who obtained the posts or the allocation of a service on the base of their closeness to parties' apparatuses (Meynaud; 1966)[99]. This approach, especially in the South, discouraged the development of a private economy (Santoro, 2014)[100], let alone of an economic modernization (Trigilia, 2016), leaving "relatively few other options for employment rather than the state" (Hine, 1993; 238).

By the late 1970s, this system was so extended and costly that parties began to search for alternative financial resources to invest in turn in their electoral activity[101]. These resources were illicitly extracted in the forms of bribes by exchanging with entrepreneurs funds allocation so that whereas the partitocracy linked parties with state personnel and society, corrupt practices, aimed at the accumulation of money, also involved actors who operate in the private economy[102].

Besides, as in a vicious circle, the political and economic advantages of these corrupted practices boosted "the number of politicians willing to 'purchase' votes and support through strategies of individualistic mobilization as well as the incentives towards corruption whose risks – in terms of political sanctions – were consequently reduced" (Sberna and Vannuci,

[99] As argued by Golden (2010), this also led to the substitution of meritocracy with party affiliation with inevitable consequences for the quality of services provided by those public offices controlled by the parties. Similarly, Fabbrini (2009) argues that the system "institutionalised a common sense impermeable to the ideas of competition and individual responsibility and it justified attitudes towards corruption unheard of in other advanced industrialised countries" (Ibid; 31) .

[100] As it will be discussed in chapter 6 in regards to Catania, the grip over the economy exercised by the public power favoured a parasitic entrepreneurial class whom success strictly depended from public funds and therefore from the political power

[101] On this point see also Della Porta and Vannucci (1997); Golden (2000); Singer (2009); Muno (2012); Vannucci and Sberna (2013); Varraich (2014).

[102] Accordingly, Ruggiero (2010), who defines corruption as "an abuse of public power for private profit", claims it "occur in the interface between economic interest and the political apparatus" (Ibid; 88).

2013; 574 note 9)[103]. In doing so the state was transformed into a 'false market' (McCarthy, 1995) in which politicians set the price, ultimately weakening the 'moral qualities' of the country (Pizzorno, 1992)[104].

As discussed in chapter 1 (subsection 1.1.3), in terms of quality of democracy, being the rule of law "the base upon which every other dimension of democratic quality rests" (Diamond and Morlino, 2004; 23) the presence of widespread corruption in a given democracy, compromises not only the equality before the law, the horizontal accountability exercised by the judicial power and the citizens' freedom and civil rights, but it also affects the fairness of political competition and the transparency of official action at the expense of both vertical accountability and responsiveness.

Yet, to fully grasp the impact of corruption not only for the quality of democracy in the country but also, as discussed in subsection 3.2.1, for its economy, it is necessary to stress its frequency. When, in fact corruption is sporadic "it involves individuals who are swiftly identified and censored", by contrast when it is systematic "it is engrained in institutions and widespread in society to the point of affecting the day-to-day interactions among citizens and between these and their institutional representatives" (Ruggiero, 2010; 88). Besides, when widespread, corruption become more acceptable and tolerated in society so that the higher the frequency with which a deviant phenomenon occurs the lower "the utility lost because of the illegality of an action" (Della Porta and Vanucci, 1999; 18). Clearly the extent of corruption

[103] Similarly Della Porta and Vannucci (1999) explain that "the diffusion of corruption would seem to transform the structure of electoral preference: rather than the vote of identification or opinion, the cliental use of the vote as an object of exchange prevails – vote in exchange of favour" (Ibid; 108).

[104] The rise of corruption was paralleled by the rise of the so-called 'business politicians' who, similarly to the 'professional politicians', acquired upward mobility on party grounds and their ability to network also in a system of widespread corruption. While the former saw politics as a profession, these latter see it as a business (See Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999; 85 and Sberna and Vannucci 2013, 574).

does not lessen its illegal nature, however, 'if everyone participates, it is not immoral' (Sassoon, 2008) and who don't take part are likely to be excluded or, otherwise, obstructed[105].

Italian republican history is filled to the brim with corruption scandals that have in different ways linked the political class with the entrepreneurial one. Although, many of these scandals were partially covered up, they often left the impression of widespread corruption in the public-private relationship. By the early 1990s, however, due to extensive judicial and journalistic investigations, it became evident that "the distinguishing trait of the old regime was its penetration into every nook and cranny of Italian life, where it encouraged illegal activity" (McCarthy, 1995; 5).

Yet, as suggested by Pascquino, (in McCarthy 2000) although "the Italian system of corruption must be defined as political because the politicians construed it and remained at its centre, it would be totally misleading to believe that there was a sharp distinction between something like a clean and pure civic society on the one hand, obliged to pay bribes to a dirty world of politicians on the other hand. Italian corruption was systematic because a multitude of actors was involved in it and many of them happily took advantages from it" (Ibid; 83). In other words, "Italian society was not all civil society, and even civil society had its fault" (Ginsborg, 2001; 137)[106].

3.1.3 An ungoverned modernity

During the 1960s, the rise of mass parties paralleled extensive changes in Italian social fabric due to the so-called 'economic boom'. Those were incontrovertibly years of extraordinary economic growth and prosperity in which Italy, still an underdeveloped country

[105] As Caiden and Caiden (1977 cited in Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999) claim, widespread corruption makes the illicit the 'real' norm and punish those who follow the 'old' norms. Besides, Sberna and Vannucci (2013), stress that corrupt politicians, disposing of extra resources derived from illegal exchanges, have clear advantages over their honest colleagues.

[106] A similar claim was given by the anti-mafia prosecutor Giovanni Falcone (Falcone and Padovani, 1990), killed by *Cosa Nostra* in 1992, in regards to the social and political support given to organised crime in Sicily

in the 1950s due to the post-war heritage, became an important protagonist in the world economy. Industrial production targeted at exports was the inspirational driving force behind the boom which, in the five years between 1958 and 1963, triggered an average annual increase in the national GDP of 6.3 per cent (Ginsborg, 1990).

However, the weak governmental stability produced by the endless negotiations between parties meant that the economic boom lacked any political guide that could have channelled the social change generated by it within liberal democratic values and norms of citizenship (Crainz, 2003). On the contrary, "one of the striking features of the 'miracle' was its autonomous character" (Ginsborg, 1990; 216) which transformed it into an 'ungoverned tumult' (Crainz, 2012) that exacerbated rather than solve social inequalities and structural imbalances (Saraceno, 1963). Unsurprisingly, as argued by Bull (1996) "the most important reason for this failure was that, as a consequence of the primordial role played by political parties in the system, institutions did not function on the basis of efficiency and availability to all. When an institution is regulated by sectional or partisan (rather than universalistic) criteria, the capacity of the institution to promote integration in society declines." (Ibid; 135)

The industrial focus of the 'boom' along with the inability of ruling parties to plan any long-term reform further aggravated the North-South divide[107] as capital and resources were concentrated in the centre-north excluding most of the southern regions of the country where, in contrast, the inefficient public sector became a social safety net and the hub of clientelistic exchanges (Santoro, 2014)[108].

Besides, the dichotomy between a vibrant private economy crowded by dynamic professionals and a static state sector characterised by anachronisms and populated by

[107] In this respect, Hine (1993) argues that while, during the economic boom, the level of resources consumed in the south increased "this was largely achieved through emigration" (ibid, 39). Thus, in terms of GDP, the economic gap between the two parts of the country was not narrowed.

[108] As Golden (2010) claims, "between 1973 and 1990, nearly 60 percent of Italian civil servants were appointed outside procedures" (Ibid; 16)

political clients gave way to a specific, if not anomalous, process of modernization in which citizens with 'a double moral' (Crainz, 2012) requested individual material resources without, however, taking personal responsibility, demanded individual freedom from public norms and at the same time searched for political protection, expected efficiency in public services despite evading the taxes destined to fund those services[109].

However, along with these distortions, the secularization process that accompanied the 'economic miracle' triggered the involvement of a large number of social strata into collective actions[110] which began to question and reject some archaic traits of Italian society and more importantly the role of mediator that political parties had monopolised challenging in this both the Dc's institutional network of power and the Pci's oppositional role within the political system (Revelli, 1996).

Yet, whereas it doesn't surprise that the Dc reacted to this challenge with a strengthening of its web of power, the hostile role played by the Pci was, in contrast, unexpected but decisive for both the purpose of the movements and for their political strength. The Communist party perhaps felt the social movements would undermine the integrity of the working class[111] and misunderstood the importance of changing the forms of political appeal and representation in view of the social transformations brought by the miracle[112]. This inevitably sanctioned the Dc strategy leading to "the creation of a system of unified power, closed to every form of social opposition and autonomous cultural expression." (Bernardi, Jacquemet, Vitali, 2009;

[109]As Ginsborg (2001) notes, the priority given by Italians to personal success and material benefits and their despise for rules and collective interests mirrored the way the political parties governed the country and constituted the cultural and social basis on which the parties' clientelistic and corruption system proliferated

[110] These began with the Students Movements in 1968 and increased with the Blue-Collar ones in the so-called Hot Autumn of the early 1970s (Ginsborg, 1996).

[111] As claimed by Ginsborg (1990), the Pci remained attached to an image of society still dominated by poverty and exclusion, misreading the new social conflict existing within the new consumer society.

[112] As Amyot (1981) claims the inability of the Pci to embrace the social movements lay on its "preference for representative bodies in which it is possible to encounter members of other parties over spontaneous assembles and other less organised expression of civil society" (Ibid; 175).

26). This system was ratified in the alliance of the late 1970s between the Dc and Pci, together representing the 70 per cent of the electorate; a 'government of national solidarity' for the Christain Democrats and a 'historical compromise' for the Communist party. While, this latter saw in this coalition a way to find institutional legitimation and to give more flexibility to the otherwise blocked political system in reality it ended up being an integral party of that partitocratic system led by Dc[113] reinforcing in this the power hold by the parties over state and society (Revelli, 1996).

This discouraged the social energies expressed in the collective movements that had the undesirable effect to radicalising them into the political terrorism of the 1970ss and to reinforce the centrality of the state in favour of the most conservative elements both of the political spectrum. The so-called *anni di piombo* (era of terrorist outrages) foreshadowed other forms of social conflict and triggered the retreat into private life[114], thus cancelling out those messages of civil transformation previously expressed. In the light of the post-Fordism phase of the 1980s, therefore, "the prospect of liberalization and democratization expressed by the movement was twisted into a process of cultural transformation in which intellectual labour was engulfed by the economic cycle of corruption" (Bernardi, Jacquemet, Vitali, 2009; 28-29).

[113] In this respect, Guzzini (1995) claims that the Italian system violated all the parameters defining consociational democracy and had established a consociational clientelism in that it was covert and it mediated conflict through clientelistic appeal. Similarly Bogaards (2005) argues that "Italy was never a consociational democracy but adversarial electoral competition and polarised pluralism went together with the patterns of elite collusion that were largely hidden from view…" (Ibid; 516)

[114] As Crainz (2012) suggests, such retreat (*riflusso*) was the result of both the radicalization of political ideology (and its degeneration into the terrorist outrages of those years), and the gap between the partitocratic system and the social and economic change of the early 1980s. In this respect, as stressed by Bernardi, Jacquemet, Vitali (2009), the ideological commitment of the previous decade was utterly substituted by consumeristic and hedonistic principles and by 'superficial optimism and competitive individualism' that had in Craxi's Psi its political expression and in Berlusconi's emerging private television network its sociocultural one.

The governmental failure of the Dc-Pci alliance, embodied in the assassination of its architect Aldo Moro by the *Red Brigades*, along with the post-industrial socioeconomic transformations further separated the two major parties from their electoral base.

Yet, whereas the Dc, unable to renew its strategy or develop any that was not the usual business of partitocracy, further invested in tactical coalitions in order to maintain the impact, the Pci demonstrated again its inability to follow socioeconomic transformations and adapting its appeal accordingly. To portray modernity as decadence and consumption as a social degeneration, and to sponsor self-sacrifice and collective interests over individuality were in fact in sharp contrast to the decline in the power of the industrial working class and the rise of a skilled middle class of technicians within the service sector (McCarthy, 1995).

The electoral weakening of both the Dc and Pci, created a space for the new leader-centred Bettino Craxi's Psi (Santomassimo, 2011) which, while proclaimed its intention to modernise the country via 'Grand Reforms', had its 'principal expressions' in a systematic corruption system, a despise for the independence of the judiciary and a grave disregard over the increasing public debt (Ginsborg, 2001). In adopting the Dc method of patronage, pork-barrel and spoil system[115], "the Psi was caught in a vicious circle of its own making. By governing with the Dc, it dissipated its reformist energies. The only way it could assert itself was in the war for spoils." (McCarthy, 1995; 128).

The more the Dc and the Psi struggled for the control of state and society the more the negative effect on the economy increased. It is in fact symptomatic that although these years saw inflation lowering from 10.8 per cent to 4.7 per cent there was no attempt at reducing the annual government spending deficit (Pacquino, 2000) which by contrast increased of the 30

[115] As Noted by Pascquino (2000), in fact, to proclaim the intention to reform state institutions and the political system was only an electoral strategy to portray the Psi as different from the static Dc and alienated Pci. In reality Craxi took extensive advantage from the way both institution and political system were organised.

per cent in the short space of two years (1985-87) without any corresponding improvement of its quality (Santoro, 2014).

Within this context the Psi easily became the major political referent for the new social stratum which "grew economically thanks to systematic illegality, tax evasion, the use of unreported workers, the payment of bribes, and in the most extreme cases, direct connections with Mafia business" (Berardi, Jacquemet, Vitali, 2009; 57)[116].

Accordingly, to be a socialist in the 1980s meant "to have a portable telephone and a BMW, to mix with high-flying lawyers and businessmen, to lunch at Matarel or Savini in Milan's Galleria, to have a good line of conversation on information technology and to take exotic holidays" (Ginsborg, 2001; 151). The party's traditional internal debate among its working-class members was therefore replaced by TV style congresses where privileged relationships with some of the most ambiguous protagonists of the second economic miracle, such as Berlusconi and Ligresti, were endorsed. It is within this idea of modernity expressed in the interaction of political and economic elite, often associated with corrupt masonic lodges, that the practice of bribes became systematic (Della Porta, 1997).

As examined in the next section, the evolution of this particular way to exercise political power and this specific set of social and cultural values will, by the end of the 1980s, reach a point of saturation bringing the country straight towards the crisis of the early 1990s.

[116] Similarly Gundle and parker (1996) claim that the party rather than attract the new post-industrial strata formed by the middle class working in the productive sector, it became the political voice for "dubious financiers, bogus architects, pop intellectuals, the vulgar fringes of the new rich, place-seekers and time-serves, all of whom were happy to share in the belief that they were on the crest of the wave and that the future as well as the present belonged to them." (Ibid; 93).

3.2 The Crisis of the Italian partitocracy: causes, course and outcomes

3.2.1 An explanatory model

As claimed in chapter 1, while Ginsborg (2001) explaining the crisis of the Italian First Republic, discourages from deterministic explanations and suggests that notwithstanding its numerous faults, the partitocratic system "could well have survived being bombarded from one direction" (Ibid; 253), other authors (Allum, 1993; Revelli, 1996; Bull and Rhode, 1997; Crainz, 2012; Santomassimo, 2011) by taking into account the many fault lines and saturation points of the Italian partitocracy, explained its crisis as predictable and inevitable[117]. Accordingly, given the inefficiency and costs of this latter, it is still conceivable that in the long term it would have become, in the best case scenario, economically unaffordable if not unsustainable *per se*[118]. Besides, the political system, being unable to reform itself[119] so to correct its numerous faults was inevitably more exposed to exogenous and/or endogenous demand for change[120].

In this respect, Bull and Rhode (2007) suggest distinguishing between structural and conjunctural crises; whereas "the structural crisis is deeply rooted in the institutional arrangements of the country and in the norms of political behaviour" (Ibid; 5), the conjunctural crisis is a breaking point represented by contextual and exogenous factors. Accordingly, what happened at the beginning of the 1990s could be seen as a combination of both old structural issues and

[117] Accordingly, Bull and Rhode (1997) claim that "in many respects, the collapse was the inevitable consequence of the systematic abuse of power… If, by the late 1980s, the system was rotten, its very nature also hindered the key political actors from behaving much differently if they wished to stay in power (Ibid; 5-6).

[118] In this regards, Hopkin (2002) highlights the incompatibility between the need of public resources on which parties had based their electoral strength and the austerity program of those years.

[119] As it will be discussed later in this chapter, in fact, authors indicated as one of the major endogenous causes of the crisis of the First Republic the inability of the political class to regenerate itself and correct the economic recklessness of the partitocratic system.

[120] IN this respect some authors stressed that had there been the possibility of power alternation between parties (Sassoon, 2008) or less endemic corruption (Guzzini, 1995) or a stronger public ethic, the system perhaps would have managed to neutralise those damaging elements and renovate itself.

new external scenarios which together set the field for "a conjunctural expression of a much deeper seismic shift" (Ibid; 658).

However, whether the crisis was a 'chronicle of a death foretold' (Allum, 1997) or rather the result of an unfortunate coincidence of events, or whether it was an inevitable outcome or rather an unexpected one, it is nonetheless necessary to design an explanatory model so to establish the impact that each one of the causes indicated by authors (the end of ideological divide, the process of European integration, the anti-corruption and referendum campaign) had on the partitocratic system and more importantly to reveal their correlations so to ultimately understand to what extent the crisis was triggered by internal demand for change or rather by the rising of new external pressures.

Ideology

As previously mentioned, the end of Communism in Eastern Europe, symbolically represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, has been commonly considered a major first trigger of the crisis given the cumbersome role the so-called 'communist question' and the consequent 'polarised ideology' had played in the political system and the electoral behaviour of voters. A first outcome in this regards, was the de-radicalisation[121] of the Pci into the Pds to which it corresponded the end of the anti-communist role played until there especially by the Dc[122]. As a result, those many voters who had reluctantly 'hold their noses'[123] and support the Christian Democrats out of fear of communism were now no longer constrained by such ideological divide.

[121] As Morlino (2009) notices, however, while initially there was a process of de-radicalisation in the system within the so-called Second Republic new radicalisations emerged (periphery vs centre – centre-left vs centre-right) also along the communist vs anti-communist divide

[122] At the same time, as noted by Bull and Newell (1996), the weakening of the Dc was also caused both by the secularisation process and more importantly the "rising dissatisfaction of voters with its management of the political system (Ibid; 207).

[123] 'To hold the nose and vote for the Dc' was the suggestion Idro Montanelli gave to his reader in one of his most famous article in 1976

However, without undervaluing the implications that the end of communism certainly had in Italy, as some authors (Pasquino, 1989; Guzzini, 1995; Bull and Newell, 2005; Bull, 2012; Crainz, 2012-2015) claim the 'communist threat' had gradually lost its significance, especially during the 1980s, as it had become incompatible with the a-ideological (Caciagli, 1977) spoil system organised by parties along with the ungoverned social and economic modernization of the post-Fordism phase.

Accordingly, Pizzorno (1993)[124] defines the ideological conflict 'illusory' in that it began more and more only a political story to sell to the electorate while in contrast the "sharp verbal and public dissension was accompanied by a practice of under-the-table negotiations and deals" (Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999; 116). This rhetorical use of ideological divisions was used as an alibi (Ginsborg, 2001) to justify and legitimate the system in that establishing a sort of 'dual layer model' in which to a visibly polarised political system corresponded a hidden and transversal one (Giuliani, 1997).

Moreover, in societal terms, since the 1970 the electoral body became less and less affected by the ideological divide. In this regards, while Pascquino (2000) claims that "the electoral support the Dc enjoyed in the eighties…was largely determined by anti-Communism, by an extensive clientelistic network, and by being considered the political representative of most Catholic association." (Ibid; 81), Bull and Newell (2005) argue that "the decline of Catholicism and anti-communism increased the party's dependence on its third pillar of support (patronage)" (Ibid; 13)[125]. This latter did not operate thanks and within any specific ideological framework so that its crisis cannot be fully explained by the fall of the Berlin's Wall.

[124] As argued in chapter 3, the ideological divide had become illusory in that it was maintained and enlarge by the political class to obtain recognition but in reality was only a way to "deflects attention away' (Pizzono, 1993; 292) from the covert activities of the partitocratic system.

[125] As Sassoon (2008) claims, while the ideological divide can explain how the partitocratic system arose it is not able to explain why it ended (ibid; 134).

Therefore, as "the key to the post-war settlement (initially the Dc rule) was the use of state resources to finance consensus" (ibid; 31) any economic downturn could expose the system to a crisis and undermine its integrity, as happened in the early 1990s. It follows that, to better "understand how the international situation was really affecting Italy we should look not to Berlin but to Maastricht and to the new project for European integration that would force even Italy to face its moment of truth" (Crainz, 2015; 176).

While the end of the ideological divide, by leaving the Dc without its traditional anti-communist role, had partially destabilised the political system, it was the austerity programme enacted to meet the Maastricht treaty parameters that triggered a fiscal crisis and, with that, directly undermined the principles through which it operated (Sassoon, 1997) [126]. This in turn led to a motivational crisis in the electorate which, on the one side, began more fluid and in search of new political appeal and, on the other side, strongly supported a number of referendum campaigns launched against the old regime.

As it will be examined next, to the weakening of the system corresponded the action of the judiciary with the so-called Clean Hands (*Mani Pulite*) anti-corruption operation, which exposed the persistent corruption within the system and its cost for the economy of the country (Guzzini, 1995).

Mani Pulite (Clean Hands)

The vast anti-corruption judicial campaign or legal revolution' (Nelken, 1996)[127] nicknamed *Mani Pulite* seemed to begin when in February 1992 Mario Chiesa, a socialist manager of a public hospice, was arrested after being caught taking a bribe of about £3.000. Despite the fact that this was an isolated and almost unnoticed case, a self-fulfilling process

[126] As the English author claims, in fact, "Fiscal crises, which elsewhere have destabilised the so-called social democratic model, in Italy destabilised the Christian Democratic state" (ibid; 289).

[127] As the author stresses, with revolution is not meant that *Clean Hands* was an attempt to overthrown the state but on the contrary an attempt to re-establish the rule of law that in a so corrupted system could not but have revolutionary consequences.

of investigations followed, giving way to a 'virtuous circle' (Della Porta, 2001) extending beyond Milan town court, which saw investigations mushrooming through an 'emulative effect' (Sberna and Vannucci, 2013) to over thirty cities around the country, involving apart from three quarters of all government officials, tens of thousands among politicians, parties' members, administrators and entrepreneurs both at the central and local level[128].

Clean Hands, although sufficient to attract attention in quantitative terms, was a surprise in qualitative ones, as it involved also the most well-known and high-profile institutional politicians; those who belonged to the 'political oligarchy' and, therefore, were considered until then untouchable (Ginsborg, 2001)[129].

Besides, in economic terms, investigations made visible the cost of corruption which had reached by then unaffordable levels. The number and cost of public works and services had quadrupled during the 1980s and their quality lowered. While both the bribe-giver (the entrepreneur) and the bribe-taker (the politician), took extensive advantages from their involvement in corrupt exchanges, the financial consequences of such system fell back exclusively on tax-payers[130].

Yet, beyond quantitative and economic aspect, it is necessary to understand how the judicial campaign was possible in a country where corruption had been extensively exercised for decades without being effectively prosecuted, or without damaging the electoral

[128] Just in Milan over 5000 people were under investigation, 3175 were sent for trial, 1233 plea bargains (Source: *Il Sole24Ore*)

[129] Two examples among the many are Craxi and Andreotti (the latter was 29 times minister of the Republic including 7 premierships and the most influential and ambiguous Dc leader since the 1906s) who were directly involved in the judicial investigation and faced serious allegations, such as political corruption and 'external' association with the Sicilian *Cosa Nostra*.

[130] According to Cazzola (quoted in Rhode, 1997) companies annually funnelled 800 billion lire (around €400 million) into parties coffers with a total amount of 3,400 billion lire (€1.5 billion) illegally extract by parties. Besides, it was calculated that the bribe system, a part from increasing the cost of public contracts often promoted only to fuel the corrupt exchanges, had an annual cost for tax payer of 10 billion lire (€5 million) and it caused an increment of the public debt between 150,000 and 250,000 billion lire (between €75 and 125 billion) (Barbacetto, Gomez and Travaglio, 2012).

accountability of those involved in it. What changed at the beginning of the 1990s so that the judiciary could finally prosecute the corrupters?

On this point, as above mentioned, some authors (Bull and Newell, 2005; Ginsborg, 2001; Burgess and Bufacchi, 1998; McCarthy, 1995) claim the end of the ideological divide provided the magistrates with the possibility of finally investigating without running the risk of providing room for anti-system political forces, namely the Pci.

However, whereas the de-radicalization of this latter may have encouraged prosecutors, taking into account the weakening of 'ideological polarization' both for the political system and electoral body, this factor alone does not provide a convincing answer.

An alternative account can be found again in the Maastricht's effect in that, apart from undermining the complicity between parties and voters, it weakened the one between the politicians and entrepreneurs[131]. Restrictions in public spending and increase in taxation meant in fact less resource available to invest in the corrupt exchanges and higher costs to pay for the entrepreneurs who unsurprisingly began to find such exchanges suddenly problematic.

Accordingly, one key aspect that made the investigations successful was the co-operation that magistrates received from many entrepreneurs who driven by economic rather than moral remorse found the payment of bribes less and less convenient[132]. By then the political parties were unable to provide the economic advantages expected by the businessmen who paid the

[131] As Guarnieri (1997) states, "since the parties were no longer able to exert influence on the policy processes, the old complicities – for example in the assignment of public works – decline in importance, facilitating the investigative effort of the judiciary (Ibid; 166)

[132] In this respect, Golden (2010) claims that "rent-seeking political regimes, based on widespread corruption, will collapse when international economic competition change the incentives facing domestic business, such that the can no longer afford to pay the excesses taxes represented by bribes" (Ibid; 25). Similarly, Hopkin (2002) argues that the system was "no longer sustainable in the era of 'permanent austerity' and Italian business interests were not prepared to sacrifice Italy entry into the euro for the sake of the Dc and Psi's survival" (Ibid; 17)

bribes (Guarnieri, 1997) [133]. This inevitably broken the silence that had protected the corrupt exchanges and the whole process was set in motion[134].

Besides, as pointed out by Pasquino (2000), magistrates were able to bypass the need for parliamentary authorization, one of the main obstacles previously experienced in investigating politicians, by aiming at 'small (but talkative) fish' such, for instance Mario Chiesa[135], the middle-ranking Psi party functionary arrested in February 1992 . After a few weeks in jail, dumped by his own party[136], Chiesa began to "name names and those names named more names until the Top Names came out, and these were names everyone knew: Craxi, Andreotti, Forlani" (Sassoon, 2008; 125).

Eventually, a further key factor in the success of the investigations was the weakening of those collusive strategies between political and judicial corruption which had contributed to allow corruption scandals to be covered up in the past (Guarnieri, 1997; Bull and Newell, 2005)[137]. While the high degree of independence from political control that the judiciary has in Italy did surely played a crucial part for *Clean Hands* investigations (Nelkel, 1996), at the same time, this had not impeded politicians, surely the most powerful among them, from establishing informal relationships of collusion with some influential members of the judicial

[133] Similarly, Hopkin (2002) claims that austerity programs by affecting the integrity of political parties not only trigger electoral volatility but also favour the rise of 'opportunistic political entrepreneurs' who take advantage from the weakness of the traditional parties.

[134] As claimed by Nelken (1996), in fact, an essential condition for a system of corruption to exist is the loyalty and silence on the part of all the actors involved.

[135] Chiesa was not a member of parliament and so he could not enjoy parliamentary immunity.

[136] After Chiesa's arrest, Bettino Craxi made an untactful remark on TV referring to him using the derogatory term of *mariuolo* (in Neapolitan dialect a rogue).

[137] According to Della Porta (2011), "the development of political corruption favoured a similar spread of corruption in the judiciary. The diffusion of political corruption actually reduces its moral costs, clearly making it easier for the judiciary to engage in corrupt practices and to view such practice as part of an unwritten code" (Ibid; 11).

system[138] which, while not entirely under the control of parties, was still exposed to their influence (Sasson, 2008)[139].

Thus, whereas up until 1992 lack of judicial action, the political control over media and an electoral body partially unable to punish its corrupt representatives had supported the partitocratic system (Sberna and Vannucci, 2013), the external economic constrains coming from Maastricht underpinned those mechanisms creating the opportunity for a small part of the judiciary to re-establish the role of law and scrutinise an already crumbling political class.

Civil Society

A final endogenous anomaly that led to the crisis of the Italian partitocracy was the role played by civil society not just for the support given to the magistrates but also for the one provided to the referendums in 1991 and 1993[140]. While this support was expressed in different ways (Crainz, 2015)[141], it did clearly resemble a net opposition to the partitocratic system, as if once that specific political system had been neutralised, all the country's troubles would have disappeared in turn. Accordingly, although misleading, the idea of a net distinction between an oppressive and corrupt political class and a sound and victimised civil society soon took shape. In this respect, it could be claimed that the uncertainty and complex

[138] In this regards Guarnieri (1997) claims that while the partitocratic system had unsuccessfully attempted several times to control the judiciary (in particular the Psi during the 1980s) it still managed to influence it via informal and covert negotiations and by establishing 'personal ties' with its most influential members.

[139] Accordingly, as some authors stress, the Clean Hands campaign was not the result of a core action taken by the judicial system *per* se, but rather the outcome of the action of a minority group of magistrates belonging to that generation of public prosecutors and judges that during the 1970s had replaced those more conservative members who had grown up under Fascism (Bull and Newell, 2005)

[140] As claimed in chapter 1, the referendum campaigns in 1991 and 1993 aimed at reducing government instability by replacing the proportional electoral system with a two party/coalition one that could boost governmental stability and therefore its level of responsiveness and openness to vertical accountability. Yet, this new system, known as the Mattarella Law (from the name of its originator), was in reality a quasi-bipolar system in that 75% of the members of parliament were elected by a majoritarian system and the remaining 25% by a proportional one.

[141] As it is discussed below, there was surely a difference, for example, between those who supported the Northern League for mere economic interests and those who supported *La Rete* as a form of moral request of change

plot of the crisis was in somehow reduced to a conflict between the political system, converted into a scapegoat, and the rest of the country[142].

Yet, as claimed above, without underplaying the role played by political parties in perpetrating corrupt practices, this 'conflict-resolving-crisis' model appears too simplistic. As Sassoon (2008) stresses, "a large proportion of those who used to vote for the five governing parties …had a high level of tolerance for corruption because they themselves participate in some form of clientelism, however marginally" (Ibid; 135). "Another way of expressing this point is by saying that the electorate punished the traditional parties for failing to deliver the goods which characterised the partitocratic spoils system." (Burgess and Bufacchi, 1998; 55). In this respect, Mastropaolo (2000) suggests that had the magistrates expanded their action towards the lack of public ethic that had turned most Italians into accomplices of the system or had the system been able to afford the network of benefits and maintain their legitimacy with the electorate, the key support of the judiciary from society would perhaps not have been so extensive and committed. Eventually, "ordinary Italians were never forced to ask uncomfortable questions about their behaviour - how much the dominant culture of *Tangetopoli* (clienterism, corruption, nepotism, tax evasion, etc.) was in fact their own" (Ginsborg, 1996; 28).

Therefore, to say that Italians knew how corrupt the country was, is not "to underestimate the complexity of the verb to know" (McCarthy, 1995; 141) but, rather, it is to include in that complexity the fact that many people experienced and were in a variety of ways part of what Sassoon (2008) defines 'a democratization of corruption'; that is the

[142] According to both Simmel (1955) and Coser (1956), a conflict can also act as a solution to a given crisis when the presence of an enemy/scapegoat is introduced in order to solve the complexity of the crisis into a more linear, and simple, binary logic that sees a group with which society can perhaps conveniently identify with and another group from which society distinguishes itself and identifies as the cause of the crisis

widespread and therefore not morally punishable participation of large social stratums in small and/or big clientelistic and/or corruption exchanges.

It was not "an occasional newspaper article" (McCarthy, 1995; 141) which informed an otherwise unaware society. The novelty lay on the opportunity for voters to take a 'vendetta' against a political class whom they considered increasingly greedy and arrogant (Pascquino in MaCarthy, 2000) and unable to guarantee the counter benefits previously provided, leaving just the unpleasant consequences of corruption, such as inefficiency and public deficit[143].

At the same time, though, Ginsborg (2001) suggests to distinguish between those voters who had benefited from the system and then conveniently turned their back to it and those employed in the public sector who "developed, along with their counterparts in the rest of Europe, 'reflexive' and critical attitudes towards many aspects of Italy's helter-skelter modernization" (ibid; 252). This could be found in the differences between the support received by the Northern League, which, despite its battle against the old parties, it resembled their culture in adopting a familial and party-dominated ethos, and the one received by *La Rete* which represented the political expression of a moral request for change towards collective rather than local issues and solutions[144].

This distinction, however, despite truthful, did not last too long. This can be proved by looking at the short-lived success of *La Rete*, a success perhaps more attributable to the emotional reactions to the massacres of 1992, rather than to any general moral renewal. But

[143] In this respect, Ginsborg (1996) claims that Clean Hands cannot be considered a cultural revolution as the students and labour movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s had been; rather it was a media spectacle in which people were entertained by watching the most powerful politicians coming under investigation, losing their privileges and being exposed for their malpractices.

[144] Besides, beyond these distinctions, the author stressed the role played by education in helping the growth of a social awareness and the formulation of a moral change. It was not by chance that the Northern League's electoral base was among the little educated, working classes whereas *La Rete* found supporters among the highly educated members of the Sicilian middle classes. "Temporarily at least, Robert Putman's geographical and historical location of Italian civic virtues (Putman, 1993) seemed to have been turned upside down." (ibid; 32).

more importantly, it can be inferred from both the long-lasting local success of the Northern League and the one of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, especially in the south, in which many elements of continuity with the anomalies of the old regime, as the next section will show, can be found.

3.2.2 The Crisis Outcomes: continuities vs discontinuities

This concluding subsection looks at the outcome of the crisis of the early 1990s; namely the so-called Italian Second Republic. The aim here is to compare this latter with the old partitocratic system so to be able to establish whether or not the crisis can be considered an authentic 'turning point' from that peculiar political organisation t; in other words, whether or not the crisis improved the quality of democracy in the country by revising the numerous faults that had led the old regime to its collapse[145].

As mentioned in chapter 1[146], there have been two major analytical frameworks at work regarding the effect of the crisis. On the one hand, there are those who see the passage from the First to the Second Republic as a reshuffling of the same cards, or in Italian terms, as the result of a *transformismo*, where the power block eventually collapses in order to re-emerge in an ostensibly new form (Romano, 1995). On the other hand , there are those who point out that undoubtedly in the new electoral arrangement, in a new form of 'personal leader-ism' (Calise, 2000), and with the rise of new political parties and a new political class[147] lies the undisputable novelty created by the crisis.

In terms of discontinuity, one undeniable level of change that stood out from the others was the possibility of an alternation of power between a centre-right and a centre-left

[145] In this regard, it is crucial to understand whether or not it was improved with the Second Republic not only governmental stability, accountability and responsiveness but also the promotion of licit, equal and universal criteria in the exercise of political and administrative power.
[146] See section 1.2
[147] Yet, as Della Porta and Vannucci (2007) claim, a large number of politicians were recycled from the parties of the First Republic (Ibid; 830).

coalition of parties. Berlusconi's government of 1994 was in fact replaced by Prodi's government in 1996 giving the impression that Italy, once freed from ideological split, could finally increase its level of political competition, and with that the one of both vertical accountability and responsiveness[148] and make its first step towards a competitive and accountable form of democracy (Fabbrini, 2009).

Yet, this achievement was not followed by an improvement in the field of policy-making. Apart from the successful introduction of those policies brought in to meet European conditions for adopting the common currency (the Euro), there was little stability within government due to the instability within coalitions (Fabbrini, 2000)[149].
Similarly to the past and notwithstanding the electoral reform towards a bi-polar organisation, the post-crisis period saw the political arena taken over by new small centrist parties, following the breaking up of the Dc, which increased party fragmentation giving a sense of continuity in terms of party veto power and weak governance (Bull and Newell, 1996)[150].
Besides, whereas in the old regime the two major parties (Dc and Pci), monopolised between 60 and 70 per cent of votes, within the new party system, votes were equally divided between four or five different parties of a similar size which further undermined the bipolar structure which the electoral reforms intended to foster (D'Alimonte and Bartolini, 1997)[151].

It is no surprise, therefore, that the bipolar logic at the electoral level has hitherto largely been reduced at the parliamentary level. Parliament has continued to be organised

[148] As discussed in chapter 1, if vertical accountability regards the possibility for citizens to scrutinise official actions, when these do not respond to their collective requests, to punish and opt for alternative political forces, lack of power alternation undermines this process.
[149] Accordingly, neither Berlusconi's 1994 government, nor Prodi's 1996 were kept in check and fell because of parties within their coalitions (the Northern League in 1994 and the Communist Refoundation in 1996).
[150] As the authors claims in fact, within the new system "the number of parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies reached 16, up from 14 in 1987" (Ibid; 219). Similarly, Morlino (2009) stresses that just the Dc was substituted at least by five different centrist parties of different size.
[151] The authors also stress the high level of electoral volatility due to the collapse of the old regime that widely opened the 'electoral market'. Between 1992 and 1994 at least one third of the electorate change its party preference (Ibid; 121)

around two main coalitions but, by means of the creation within each of them of a host of parliamentary groups seeking to control important public resources, the cohesion and coherence of the two coalitions have been regularly called into question. (Crainz, 2015) Ultimately, the combination of a multi-party landscape and a bipolar electoral arrangement transformed the new Italian party system into a 'fragmented bipolarism' (D'Alimonte, 2005; Fabbrini, 2009)

Although a clearer pre-electoral governmental composition was achieved, the veto power exercised by small parties within the coalitions remained a decisive factor, reducing the opportunity to strengthen the executive favouring in this parties' interests and increasing the extent of covert negotiation in the decision-making process. In continuity with the partitocratic system of the First Republic, the lack of transparency in official actions and decisions weakened both the vertical accountability and responsiveness of the system (Parker, 2007)[152]. Once again the dispersion of parliamentary power and weak decision-making by government was compensated by covert negotiations and spoils so to control or block the formulation and implementation of policies[153].

Accordingly, "the rapidity of access to government for the new elites, and their frequent alternation in power, encouraged them to resort to old informal practices inherited from the old regime as a mechanism to stabilize their authority over policymaking. The use of patronage networks permitted the new elites to build their own autonomous power bases, obstructing the institutionalization of political competition." (Di Mascio, 2012; 391-392)

[152] Accordingly, Morlino (2007) argues that, although the new electoral system was designed around a majoritarian criteria so to improve "effective decision making and greater administrative efficiency" (Ibid; 24), due to the high level of party fragmentation the system remained partially proportional. (On these level of continuity see also Fabbrini, 2009). Besides, Sandri, Telo' and Tomini (2013) state that the fragmentation of the parliament not only increased the power hold by parties but also undermine its watchdog function and lowered the horizontal accountability of the system (Ibid; 272)

[153] In this respect, Fabbrini (2009) claims that, apart from the political instability, such opportunistic behaviour was also the result of the old regime's culture of mediation and covert negotiations that formed 'cognitive patterns' still informing both the behaviour and thinking of the country political elites (Ibid; 33).

More crucially though, despite its centrality to the development of the crisis, during the post-crisis period the return of political spoil was accompanied by the return of systemic corruption[154] which however lost the media and social attention previously gained[155]. Accordingly, although the Clean Hands campaign's undeniable accomplishments in the 'criminalization of politics', the absence of significant anti-corruption reforms in the post-crisis period gave the system of corruption the chance to recover from the trauma and to regenerate (Sberna and Vannucci, 2013).

Besides, an element of novelty with the past was represented by a more aggressive practice of 'politicization of anti-corruption' (ibid; 570) mainly but not exclusively carried on by Berlusconi's attempts to bring into question the 'impartiality' of the judiciary and to polarise values and opinions in both media and society about anti-corruption inquires[156].

Yet, the political counter-attack was not limited to a rhetorical accusation. After the 2001 and 2008 elections, both won by the centre-right coalition, direct legislative actions[157] were in fact undertaken by the government to reduce and impede the effect of anti-corruption

[154] While the in quantitative terms the level of corruption during the Second Republic resembled the one of the old regime, as Crainz (2015) suggests, there was a 'qualitative difference' in that before corruption was mostly aimed at financing party activities subsequently it became a mean for personal gains. This is illustrated by the shift from 'stealing for the party' to 'stealing the party' (Ibid; 184). Besides, as Della Porta and Vannucci (2007) suggest, with the end of the Clean Hands 'emergency' and the weakening of the anti-corruption cause in the country, the involvement in corruption practices became again convenient and less risk and, therefore, again widespread.

[155] As Sberna and Vannucci (2013) argue, the involvement in criminal activities affects the political power not only when investigation effectively prosecute the culprits, but also when the media are free to inform the electorate and this latter is keen to punish those political actors involved

[156] As Young (2001) claims, such counter-attack against the judicial acquired a sort of ideological polarization as the judiciary were accused, especially by member of the centre-right coalition, of carrying on a Bolshevik conspiracy against a political power democratically elected by the people.

[157] Those were the so-called 'Ad Personam' Laws (as many commentators defined them) which were accused to be designed around the Premier's legal troubles. Some examples are: the reform of the law on false accounting; the reform on access to foreign documents; the reform of the statute of limitation (Ex-Cirielli Law); the Cirami Law which allowed cases to be transferred from one jurisdiction to another on the basis of a 'legitimate suspicion' of lack of impartiality on the part of the judge; the Percorella Law which was directed at preventing prosecutors from appealing a not-guilty verdict

judicial investigations and in that safeguard the Prime Minister's impunity from the rule of law (Ginsborg, 2004; Vannucci, 2009)[158].

Similarly, perhaps due to the many voices within the governing coalition, even the centre-left government, such as Prodi's in 1996 or D'Alema's in 1999, found no direct solution to the re-emergence of widespread corruption except for a few reforms aimed at reducing administrative inefficiency and improving competition in the allocation of contracts for public works (Della Porta and Vannucci, 2007).

In terms of quality of democracy, if the return of widespread corruption undermined again the principle of equality before the law, citizens' freedom and civil rights, political competition and responsiveness, the process of 'politicisation of anti-corruption' represented a direct challenge to the independence of the judiciary and with that to the horizontal accountability of the Italian democracy. By questioning the fairness and impartiality of the judicial system, the political power questioned and de facto hampered the crucial control the former should exercise over the latter by fairly and consistently apply a set of clear, publicly known, universal, stable and no retroactive laws.

Once the most intense and spectacular phase of the *Tangetopoli* affair was over, in fact, the public rebellion against the political class of the partitocratic system was progressively replaced by a normalization of corruption and the focus on scandals decreased, giving the false impression that the emergency was over (Della Porta and Vannucci, 2007). In contrast, as reported by Vannucci (2009) in the first years of the new millennium, the perception of corruption among society increased, with 84 per cent of Italians claiming to be aware of the spread of corruption, 70 per cent linking the phenomenon of corruption with organised crime and 10 per cent admitting to having been directly involved in corruption.

[158] Yet, as stresses by Young (2011) along Berlusconi's impunity these reforms defended the one of many white collars involved in criminal proceedings. After all "to put legal reform into the hands of those who share any of the same interests as criminals is as absurd as to entrust economic reform to monopolists" (Ibid; 120).

This, in line with the past, was followed by the lack of electoral punishment of those involved in criminal proceedings[159]. The decline in the interest taken by the media and society in exposing and punishing corruption was perhaps the result of a 'habituation/saturation effect' (ibid)[160] due to the frequency of corruption scandals and the lack of effective legislative and, consequently, judicial action against it. Ultimately, this encouraged those who engaged in malpractices and reduced the legal risks and moral costs involved.
As a consequence, with the rise of the Second republic corruption re-emerged as widespread and systematic as in the old regime, shutting that 'window of opportunity' the crisis in general and the *Clean Hand* anti-corruption campaign in particular had provided.

3.3 Conclusions

This chapter sought to provide a critical review of literature first on the Italian First Republic and consequently on the causes, course and consequences of its crisis. As emerged from chapter 2 and pointed out by Bull and Newell (2005), in fact without an understanding of the democratic system previously operating and its ways of functioning, the crisis can be exclusively described but not analysed and interpreted in an effective manner..

Thus, as it emerged from section 3.1, the most commonly term used to define the Italian democratic system until the early 1990s is the one of *partitocrazia* (partitocracy), which literally refers to the overwhelming power acquired by political parties and their control over state institutions, the economy and society. Yet, whereas this idea is not undesirable *per se*, the political party being an essential actor in the processes of decision-

[159] In this respect Ruggiero (2010) stress that the retention of political accountability of those politicians involved in corruption cases can be assumed to be a sign of a decreasing interest in and/or increase tolerance among voters.
[160] Similarly, Morlino (2010) argues that "as specific illegitimacy is grounded in people's perceptions, the manipulation of news broadcasts by elites is another important salient form of subversion. In particular, if there is a large monopoly of TV channels, considerable influence can be exerted on citizens' perceptions of government policies or institutions" (Ibid: 218).

making and mediation in many democratic arrangements (Pasquino, 2009), the extraordinary power gained by Italian political parties, their systematic exercise of spoil system aimed at acquiring and maintaining power, has often been considered exceptional, if not anomalous (Pizzorno, 1993). This Italian democratic arrangement has been variously explained either from a structural point of view, by indicating the fragmentation of the political system as the cause of poor responsiveness or, from a normative perspective as the result of an inadequate 'moral quality' among the political class (Pizzorno, 1992) which weakened the cultural attachment to notions such as equality, accountability, responsiveness and the rule of law (Burgess and Burfacchi, 2001).

The strong influence exercised by the Cold War anti-communism precepts impeded power alternation excluding from government the Pci and leaving the Dc indefinitely in government. However, the Christian Democrats had to share power with the numerous small parties in most cases forming unstable and short-living governments. The 'pluralistic bargaining' (Hine, 1993) that resulted blocked any possibility of achieving effective reforms and its 'stable instability' (Bull and Newell, 1996) transformed politics into a struggle by the parties over the control of public authorities and resources.

By the end of the 1970s, the system became to be in need of more and more resources which were more and more systemically illegally extracted from corrupt exchanges with economic actors with direct effect on the quality of democracy and on the public budget of the country.

However, although the electoral distribution of benefits and corrupt circles were the results of political practices, the role played by a multitude of actors from different and competing social groups who took extensive advantage of it cannot be underestimated (Pasquino, 2000; Ginsborg, 2001).

Both the 'economic boom' of the 1960s and the post-Fordism socioeconomic transformation of the 1980s, were not politically guided towards liberal democratic norms and principles,

thus shaping understood patterns of citizenship in which personal acquisition, mistrust in public rules, family-based interests, lack of personal responsibility and the search for clientelistic protection by the public were strongly rooted (Crainz, 2012).

What emerged was a vicious and self-destructive cycle in which the gap between the political parties and society created by the lack of political responsiveness and accountability was filled by more *partitocrazia* (Bull and Rhode, 1997) perpetuating those structural weaknesses and ambiguous forms of modernization that will further degenerate during the 1980s and will prepare the field for the crisis of the early 1990s when, due to new international pressures towards economic regulation, even Italy will face its 'moment of truth' (Crainz, 2015).

Accordingly, as it clearly emerged from section 3.2, among the many elements in play, the process of European integration rather than the end of the ideological divide emerged as the clear independent variable which, in a domino effect, caused the equilibrium of the Italian system to tumble. The economic restrictions imposed by the Maastricht Treaty forced the ruling party to reduce public spending and raise taxation undermining in that their legitimation and triggering a motivational crisis in the electoral body[161] which began to search for new political appeal.

This initial crumbling of the system opened a window of opportunity, on the one side, for referendum campaigns aimed at extensively modifying the electoral organization and, on the other side, for the judiciaries to finally expose the systematic level of corruption in the political and administrative sectors and in that furtherly undermining the legitimation of the Italian partitocracy.

[161] As Sassoon (1997) claims, in fact, the austerity programme enacted to meet the Maastricht treaty parameters went against the principles through which the political system operated. "Fiscal crises, which elsewhere have destabilised the so-called social democratic model, in Italy destabilised the Christian Democratic state" (ibid; 289).

Subsequently, by identifying the causes of the crisis it was also possible to examine its development; in this regards it appeared clear that those actors and institutions who analysed 'what went wrong' with the Italian partitocracy and expressed a request for change could not be found either among the political class, which was the 'victims' rather than the 'vehicle' of the crisis (Bull and Newell, 2005), or among those sector of the electoral body that had supported it. On the contrary, this analysis and this demand were formulated only by a minority among both the judiciary and society. Accordingly, while this minority legitimised a successful process of 'judicialization of politics' (Vannucci and Sberna, 2013) it ended up isolated and its work nullified once the emergency stage of the crisis was over.

This, as the last part of the chapter discussed, was reflected in the significant level of continuities in terms of quality of democracy in the country between the old and new political system, namely the so-called Second republic.

What emerged in this regard, in fact, was that, despite the changes occurred both in the party and electoral systems, the presence of more defined political coalitions and governmental compositions, let alone the possibility of power alternation between a centre-left and a centre-right, the continuities in terms of unstable government, poor accountability and responsiveness along with the return of spoil and corruption made the new remarkably similar to the old (Bull, 2012) and the crisis, rather than a turning point was transformed just in "a process of adjustment within one and the same model" (Morlino, 2009; 7).

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This research aims to explore the shape the Italian crisis of the early 1990s took within a specific local perspective, the city of Catania in Sicily. As it has emerged from chapter 3 the events under analysis prompted a political crisis which ended the old party regime (partitocracy) and ushered the rise of the so-called Second Republic. Despite the crisis have been extensively described and explained in a copious quantity of literature, the originality of this research lies in exploring what new insights a local context can provide in regard to both the causes, development and outcome of the crisis.

To be able to gather the necessary data both descriptive and explanatory qualitative methods were used. Accordingly, it was necessary, first, to obtain complementary sources of information regarding the Sicilian city, given the small amount available in academic literature. And secondly, to collect analytical reconstructions and interpretative frameworks on the before-during-after the crisis periods at local level.

The informants were purposively selected among representatives from those institutional areas involved in the crisis[162]; this includes politics, economy, society, justice system and media. The selection criteria was guided by the need to invite those representatives whom, with their professional history, position within the institution, specific knowledge and expertise could provide, on the one side, information and reconstructions of the events under analysis and, on the other side, interpretations and explanations that could be compared during the analytical stage. In addition, four participants, from Catania University; (two from the department of Political Science, one from the department of Sociology and one from the

[162] See Section 4.2.4 on sampling procedures

department of Urban Studies) were selected to provide an academic perspective on the subjects.

In-depth qualitative interviews were used for the data-gathering. The interviews, completed in Catania and its province between February and June 2016, were all tape-recorded in agreement with each informant. All those selected received a Participation Information Sheet by email and signed a Consent Form with the researcher before each interview. Besides, interviews contents were translated (from Italian into English) and a transcribed so to then develop a thematically examination of the data using NVivo 10 Software. Ultimately, informant's descriptive accounts where matched against pertinent institutional data and secondary sources of information[163].

Bearing in mind that the quality of a given research strongly lies on the soundness of its design (Lewis, 2003 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003)[164] this chapter discusses the research design (section 4.1), the data collection and sampling method chosen (section 4.2), the procedures adopted to access and obtain the data (section 4.3), the analytical criteria to evaluate it (section 4.4) and how ethical consideration were taken into account (section 4.5).

4.1 Research Design: a qualitative approach

As already claimed, the primary methodological approach of this research is qualitative in that it was considered the most appropriate way to gain sets of information and interpretations. Accordingly, it is commonly recognised that while quantitative methods assume the social reality to research as objective and measurable, test deductively (top-down) hypotheses and theories using data extracted from large samples by means of numbers and statistics and a high degree of generalisation; qualitative methods try to find explanations

[163] These are: electoral, judicial and socio-economic data gathered by national and local authorities reports and newspapers.

[164] As the authors stressed, in fact, "a good qualitative research study design is one which has a clearly defined purpose, in which there is a coherence between the research questions and the methods or approaches proposed, and which generates data which is valid and reliable" (Ibid; 47).

behind data adopting an interpretative rather than a quasi-positivistic approach to the world[165]. Here the focus is on the reasons behind a given phenomenon, the forces and influences that drive its occurrence, the individual and collective meanings attached to it[166]. Thus, social reality is assumed to be formed by different and subjective points of view from which inductively (button-up) patterns of interpretation, features and themes can emerge (Seale, 2004)[167].

Due to its descriptive and explanatory functions, qualitative research allows access to complementary set of data and reasoning that would otherwise be inaccessible, about the subject. More specifically, expert interviewing[168] can inform the researcher with knowledge, social facts, events and processes that are exclusively available to those who operate in given settings (Bogner et al, 2009). Similarly, it is also possible to unveil those attitudes, value orientations, practical perspectives and cultural models participants possess and use (Bryman, 2012). Last but not least, as stressed by Ritchie (2003 in Ritchie and Lewis 2003), qualitative methods also allow to evaluate the causes and outcomes of a given set of events, such as the one analysed by this research, in that informants can provide descriptions and explanations on contextual, motivational and cultural factors[169].

Ultimately, within a qualitative approach, social *constructivism* was thought to constitute a suitable approach for this study as it explores the ways people create the social

[165] On the notion of interpretivism and positivism as distinguishing qualitative and quantitative methods of social research see also Seale (2004; 35-36) and Bryman (2012; 28-29).
[166] Accordingly Mason (2002) claims that: "through qualitative research, we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings they generate" (Mason 2002: 1).
[167] At the same time, however, as Seale (2004) stressed, there has been a long-lasting debate on the way these two different approaches can be combined such as in the case of triangulation, multiple methods and methods to generalize (Ibid; 294). On Triangulation see also Bryman (2012; 392) and on multiple methods Mason (2002; 59).
[168] See Section 4.3
[169] The author distinguish four types of qualitative research approaches: contextual, evaluative, generative and explanatory (Ibid; 27-28). This latter was found more appropriate for the purpose of this research as it focuses on factors, motivations, contexts, origins and development of events.

reality in which they live, investigates their perceptions, explanations, beliefs and points of view, and recognises the world as socially and politically constructed (Patton, 2002)[170]. This epistemological approach, which has a long history in both sociological and philosophical thoughts, assumes knowledge as something to be created rather than as something already given[171] and, accordingly, investigates the way people construct multiple realities and what impact these constructed realities have in their life and in the relation with others in society.

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Sampling Design

Whereas quantitative research usually adopts a random sampling strategy in order to create a reasonably generalizable sample, sampling strategy in qualitative research, while can differ depending on the aim and objectives of a given piece of research, is inclined to adopt a purposively criteria to form samples. Such approach aims at selecting participants according to their utility and reliability to enable the identification and in-depth exploration of the research topics (Patton, 2002)[172]. Being the need of generalization and statistical significance not an issue, purpose sampling do not create large samples but rather small ones that however can provide in-depth details and cover with their participation all the main aspects of the topic under examination. Clearly, the specific type and number of participants depend not just

[170] Significantly, the author reports the distinction made by Crotty (1998; 58 quoted in Patton 2002) between *constructivism* and *constructionism*, where the former refers to the 'meaning-making activity of the individual mind' and the latter to 'the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning" (Ibid; 97).

[171] As stressed by Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003; in Ritchie and Lewis 2003) there are two alternative positions on qualitative research: the one of the 'miner metaphor', proposed by Kvale (1996), that sees knowledge as given and buried to be unearth by the researcher, and the one of the 'traveller metaphor' (within the constructivist approach) that sees knowledge as created and negotiated between interviewer and interviewees (Ibid; 139). (On this point see also Bogner and Menz (2009 in Bogner, Litting and Menz, 2009).

[172] The author in fact stresses that whereas the purpose of probability-based random sampling is to generalise the sample to the whole population, on the contrary, what would be a bias in quantitative sampling (a non-random but purpose selection) is the focus in qualitative ones as here the logic is to select *information-rich* cases for study in-depth (Ibid; 230).

on the research objects but also on practical considerations such as issues of accessibility and of availability in terms of time and resources[173].

4.2.2 Sampling and interviewing Experts

The attempt to find what distinguishes an expert from a lay-person has been broadly discussed within social science and it has received theoretical interest from both theory of society and sociology of knowledge (Bogner, Littig, Menz, 2009)[174]. Clearly here an exhaustive description of this ongoing debate cannot take place; yet, within the scope of this study, the criteria adopted to identify those informants whose expertise could provide insights was not merely based on their careers, but also on their professional and personal experiences as well as on their special knowledge acquired through their activities in one of the institutions selected, and on their capacity to inform the research with specific issues and interpretations[175].

As indicated in the introduction, among the many research tools available within the qualitative methods, in-depth qualitative interviews were adopted for the data-gathering. Interviews are often described as a form of communication through which the researcher can extract information from a respondent, the meanings that he/she attached to it, his/her attitudes and values (Seale, 2004). Yet, differently than everyday conversations, interviews

[173] In regards to the size of a purposive sample Bryman (2012) argue that "as a rule of thumb, the broader the scope of a qualitative study and the more comparisons between groups in the sample that are required, the more interviews will need to be carried out" (Ibid; 425). Similarly, Patton (2002) claims: "sample size depend from what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (Ibid; 244).

[174] The authors in fact indicate three waves of definition of expert: the first which sees the expert as 'agent of truth and authority', the second, based on social constructivism, stressed the validity of expert knowledge as a construction process to decode and, finally, the third, characterised by a realistic approach, sees expertise as an actual possession expert have obtained by their position and practices (Ibid; 3).

[175] As stressed by Measure and Nagel (2009 in Bogner, Littig and Menz, 2009), an expert is someone who possess a given knowledge through which she/he is able to influence the action and way to construct reality of others (Ibid; 18-19).

can be defined as being 'conversation with a purpose' (Mason, 2002)[176] or alternatively as an interactive conversation in which the researcher tries to combine structure with flexibility through the use of "a range of probes and other techniques to achieve depth of answer in term of penetration, exploration and explanation" (Legard, Keegan and Kit, 2003; 141 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Along the variation between types of qualitative interviews[177] this study has adopted a semi-structure type supported by the design of a topic guide around subject areas and themes to be discussed with the informants, allowing the interviewer to address, within the structure of the guide, both exploratory and explanatory probes[178].

The interview guide was divided into three main sections; a first one regarding Catania during the so-called First Republic; the second focused around the crisis of the early 1992 in the city, looking at its causes and course, and the third concerning the effects and consequences of the crisis at local level.

However, the topic guide rather than being rigidly structured was modified depending on the type of expertise possessed by the expert interviewed. Thus, whereas with informants operating in the local political area questions were more around the local party system, the level of political responsiveness and accountability, when an interviewee belonged to economic or social organisations of the city, question were more addressed towards socioeconomic issues, such as the composition of the local economic market, level of employment, housing and so on . On the contrary, with those operating in the judicial and media sector were debated topics such as corruption in the political and economic sphere.

[176] It follows that "no research interview can be completely lacking in some form of structure" (Ibid; 62). Accordingly qualitative interviewing is always a formal interactional exchange of dialogue topic-centred and aimed at constructing situated knowledge through dialogue.

[177] These are mainly structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. See Mason (2002; 62), Seale (2004; 165) and Bryman (2012; 473).

[178] More specifically, Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003; 150-153 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) distinguish between 'amplificatory', 'exploratory', 'explanatory', 'clarificatory' and 'interactive' probes.

In interviewing these experts, it was taken into close account the interactive nature of in-depth interviews and how, in this respect, the expert's perception of the interviewer can influence the type of information provided[179]. As suggested by Bogner and Menz (2009 in Bogner, Littig and Menz 2009), if an expert perceives the researcher as a co-expert it is assumed that "the interviewer is familiar with the practical conditions of his or her actions and shares their normative implications; there is therefore no need for the interviewee to justify any of these assumptions in the interview" (ibid, 58). By contrary, when the researcher is unaware in respect to certain issues naïve questions such those one a lay-person would addresses can be made without mismeeting the expert expectation and "it is possible to gain access to information that might not otherwise be revealed, particularly because a naïve interviewer is seen as especially trustworthy." (ibid, 64)[180].

In respect to this, this research has adopted a mixed interviewing approach. Thus, when an informant due to her/his experience and knowledge could provide information that might otherwise be unapproachable, the researcher assumed an 'unaware attitude' with the expert and explorative questions were addresses; this was to gain data that the informant would otherwise have taken for granted and not mentioned[181]. Contrary, when it was important to grasp not only information but, due to the participants professional history and position, also the interpretative patterns of the expert, more analytical traits and explanatory questions were used to generating patterns and themes by establishing with the respondent a sort of 'conversation between experts' where different interpretations and point of views were

[179] Contrarily to the quasi-positivist idea of social reality assumed by quantitative methods which see social phenomena as independent and untouched by the researcher, qualitative methods recognise in fact the interactive relationship between participants and researcher which can influence the former's attitude and type of information provided (Snape and Spencer, in Ritchies and Lewis, 2003).

[180] Moreover, apart from the *co-expert* and *lay-person* type of interactions, the authors describe also the one where the researcher is seen as a *co-expert from a different knowledge culture*, as *an authority*, as *a potential critic* and, by contrary, as *an accomplice*.

[181] Accordingly, "exploratory interviews help to structure the area under investigation and to generate hypotheses" (Ibid; 46)

debated[182]. Clearly, this was whilst avoiding adopting a critical approach that would have biased the data due to a negative disposition of the interviewee to reveal information and debate issues.

4.2.3 Sampling procedures

The informants selected were experts who worked either during the so-called First or Second Republic or during both, in one of the institutional sectors involved in the crisis such as politics, the justice system, economy, society and media. This approach sought to create a heterogeneous sample (Ritchie et al in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003)[183] that would include different institutional perspectives about the events under examination in the study. This was to establish level of similarities and/or dissimilarities among the different sources and to explore how reality was constructed by the different players belonging to different institutional realms.

A first step in the sampling procedure was to identify those public bodies, within each of the institutional realms, from which to select participants.
Hence, the following bodies were selected:

- Politics: local council, local province, political parties and organisations.
- Justice system: public prosecutor's office courthouse, law enforcements (DIA-D.I.G.O.)[184] and law societies.

[182] As again Bogner and Menz (2009 in Bogner et al 2009) claims: "the essence of the theory-generating interview is that its goal is the communicative opening up and analytic reconstruction of the subjective dimension of expert knowledge" (Ibid; 48).
[183] The authors claim in fact that heterogeneous samples or what Patton (2002; 243) calls maximum variation sampling, "is a deliberate strategy to include phenomena which vary widely from each other. The aim is to identify central themes which cut across the variety of cases or people" (Ibid; 79).
[184] The DIA is the major anti-mafia investigative department specialised on fighting on organised crime and it is led by experts taken from the different police forces of the country. The DIGOS is a general investigations and special operations division of the State Police.

- Economic sector: General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria Catania), the General Confederation of Enterprises, Professions and Self-Employment (Confcommercio Catania), the General Confederation of Operators (Confesercenti), the National Association of Construction Industry (ANCE Catania) and the major Trade Unions (CGIL-UIL Catania).
- Third sector: Anti-Mafia/Anti-Racketeering associations, Organisations for young people and fragile groups
- Media: local News Paper, Local edition of National Newspaper.
- High education: Catania University

Among these bodies, 39 informants were selected for the interviewing. This number was not determined in advance but it was based on the researcher's judgement so that when the fieldwork did not provide new insights, the same themes were recurring and enough data was collected to ensure the research questions were answered, it was decided that a 'saturation point' was reached (Seale, 2004)[185].

All interviews were conducted in Italian language and they ranged from 60 to 90 minutes each. Participants divided by the selected bodies were: 7 from the political sector, 6 from the economic one, 7 from the justice system, 7 from the third sector, 8 from the media and 4 from Catania University.

4.3 Reflexivity, Fieldwork Access and Notes

4.3.1 Reflexivity

The present research has been inspired not only by academic interests but also by my own biography. Being born and raised in Catania during the 1980s and 1990s, I was a

[185] More specifically, as stressed by the author, "saturation occurs when no new ideas are generated by empirical inquiry, after the research has made strenuous effort to find instances in the field which might contradict, or help develop further, the emergent theory" (Ibid; 233).

teenager when the Berlin's wall collapsed, when *Tangetopoli* began in Milan a few years later and when Berlusconi was elected Prime Minister for the first time in 1994. However, as Sicilian, the most significant event of those years could not but be the massacres carried out by *Cosa Nostra* in Palermo that killed the anti-mafia prosecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino along with their bodyguards.

Despite in somehow accustomed to the violence perpetrated by the Mafia, the images and news coming from Palermo between May and July 1992 did represent a sort of turning point for myself and my generation. Like many of my friends and schoolmates, I was overwhelmed by the emotional wave triggered by the massacres and I soon began to get involved in anti-mafia demonstrations both in Catania and Palermo and activities at school.

This was also the period of the so-called Catania Spring, a new administrative season led by the first directly elected mayor, Enzo Bianco, in 1993, which saw, apart from a general improvement in the provision of services, the recovery of some areas of the historical centre previously abandoned by the local administration and the mushrooming of shops, cafes, bars, restaurants and pubs. For the first time after decades, people could re-acquire and benefit from urban spaces previously off limits and hope for a better future of the city.

Surely, my personal involvement in these events have been one of the main reasons that encouraged me to carry out this research: Besides, this has allowed me not only to reduce the ethnographic distance with informants, by grasping those specific cultural, social and linguistics patterns which might be missed by a foreign researcher, but also to identify which key events and factors to include in the analysis, to know some of the peculiarities and historical backgrounds of the local context and to dispose of a network of relationships that allowed me to identify and select key informants for the interviews.

At the same time though, conducting my study, I realised my own biography was not sufficient to examine complex and key issues such as institutional crises, clientelistic politics

or organised crime. Accordingly, while I knew that the closeness to a politicians in the city was often a necessary condition for someone to find a job or obtain a service, it was only through my research that I grasped how diffuse and systemic such practices were and what impact they had on the city political and economic system. Similarly, the emotional nature of the reaction to the massacres in Palermo could not guide me to truly assess the complexity of the mafia phenomenon, its relationship with the institutional framework within which it operates and its control over economy and society. The possibility to interview informants who had covered key positions in the institutional, economic or judicial system of the city allowed me, on the one side, to acquire new and crucial information and, on the other side, to appreciate and reflect on the multi-dimensional nature of phenomena I had only a limited and personal experience of.

Moreover, my personal biography could also had potentially and partially biased the research process (data collection and analysis) and therefore raised some concern in terms of reliability. Although, contrary to a pure positivistic approach, I suppose that a researcher's interest and passion for a given subject of investigation as well as her/his closeness to respondents' culture can led to passionate and good research, it is, however, necessary to maintain a certain degree of detachment and disengagement and avoid partisan attitudes or approaches. In this respect, I believe that being based in London (UK) for almost 20 years, has inevitably provided me a good degree of detachment from the everyday dimension of the phenomena under examination. Detachment that has been also perceived by informants, which helped me to make my position as researcher more explicit. Moreover, from a methodological point of view, the use of secondary source of information allowed me to compare informants' accounts with more objective and quantitative sources increasing the validity and reliability of the data.

4.3.2 Accessing and managing the Fieldwork

During the fieldwork there were not major issues of accessibility; in line with Bogner et al (2009), in fact, accessing experts was facilitated by the fact that these latter did have strong knowledge regarding the research's topics and could therefore appreciate, more easily than lay people, the importance of the research[186].

Once a first group of participants were chosen according to the sampling criteria above discussed, contact was made by sending an email to those selected. After a first set of interviews were completed, the snow-ball technique was adopted to identify and contact other potential informants. As in the present study, snowballing is an advantageous way when the target is a small populations and "where the key selection criteria are characteristics which might not be widely disclosed by individuals…" (Ritchie et al; 94 in Ritchie and Lewis 2003)[187]. However, as new participants were selected on the base of existing ones, there was a risk of affecting the heterogeneity of the sample as it could end up being composed of people sharing similar experiences and view. This risk was counterbalanced by further selecting new potential informants (also through the use of personal network) so to create a more varied sample.

During the fieldwork a diary was kept in which the interviewees' attitudes were recorded; this was in order to enrich the findings and to complement the data gathered during the analytical phase[188]. In this respect, a first and common characteristic observed was the

[186] Moreover, as the authors claim: "a number of secondary motivating factors also make it comparatively easy to encourage and motivate experts to participate in such interviews: the professionalism of people familiar with being in the public eye; silent awareness of the scientific and/or political relevance of their field of activity or personal achievements; the desire to help "make a difference" – no matter how small; professional curiosity about the topic and field of research; an interest in sharing one's thoughts and ideas with an external expert" (Ibid; 2).

[187] Similarly, Seale (2004) claims that: "network or snowball sampling is used to obtain a sample when there is no list of the population available" (Ibid; 177).

[188] In this respect, Arthur and Nazroo (2003 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), observe that whereas the use of field-notes is often associated with ethnographic studies (see Seale, 2004; 234), when adopted in in-depth interviews methods, despite "data are captured through audio-recording, field-notes provide an opportunity to record what researchers see and hear outside the immediate context of the interview, their thoughts about the dynamic of the

participants' general availability and willingness to be interviewed. The feeling here was that most of the informants were keen to participate in order to contribute to and express their own opinion in research about their own city, conducted in a prestigious foreign university. However, within this general willingness to participate, three main types of attitude emerged, during interview: first, some interviewees adopted a sort of 'teaching attitude' towards the researcher assuming that not living in Catania can affect a full understanding of the city's peculiarities. In these cases, in order to aid the study, the researcher assumed a 'naïve attitude' so that respondents felt free to give their own view along with extra information and details which, perhaps, they would have considered unnecessary to provide to a local researcher.

Second, some interviewees showed a 'parochialism/defensive attitude' partially denying the uniqueness of certain deficiencies of some economic, political or social processes in Catania, claiming, without providing evidence, that they can be found both in the rest of Italy and Europe, if not all over the world. Clearly, despite having a different opinion, the researcher could not assume a 'critical attitude' which would have compromised the data; hence, a sort of 'indulging attitude' was adopted that would encourage the respondent to reveal in-depth his/her thoughts without feeling negatively judged.

Third, some participants, especially those who had belonged to the old party system and had in different degrees suffered the effects of the events under analysis, assumed an 'accusatory/conspiratorial attitude' and saw the interview as a chance to address those aspects of the crisis in 1992 that, according to them, had not been analysed sufficiently and in an unbiased way. Here again, the researcher avoided to assume any 'critical and/or normative' attitude so to let these informants freely provide their views and explanations.

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encounter, ideas for inclusion in later fieldwork and issues that may be relevant at the analytical stage" (ibid; 133).

4.4 Data Analysis

As stated above, the present research has assumed *constructivism* as epistemological approach so to understand those ways through which participants construct their social realities, perceptions, explanations, beliefs and points of views with the final aim of comparing them during the data analysis. As claimed by Meuser and Nagel (2009 in Bogner et al, 2009) "…in the analysis of expert interviews attention is focused on thematic units, that is passages with similar topics which are scattered about the interviews (ibid; 35)[189].

Given that, in terms of analysis, once the interviews were entirely translated and transcribed, a first step consisted in reading the entire dataset and take some preliminary notes so to begin to identify potential relevant set of information and participants' interpretations. Subsequently, however, a more systematic examination of the data was carried out by generating codes initially on a first groups of interviews so to create a code framework to subsequently apply to the rest of the data.

Codes were assigned on the base of the content of a given paragraph[190]. Accordingly, some accounts about, for instance, the local political system during the 1980s were summarised with codes such as 'parties/factions competition' – 'notables vs professional politicians' – 'public offices' – 'politics and the urban development' – 'political stability' – 'the inability of the system to renew itself' etc. Similarly, those accounts regarding the crisis of the First Republic were assigned codes such as 'ideology'—'resources' – 'local tangetopoli' – 'economic crisis' – 'referenda' etc[191].

[189] Besides, according to Seale (2004), *qualitative thematic analysis* does not look only at the number of time a theme emerged but also at the way in which themes are expressed and explained (ibid; 372).

[190] However, more than one code was given to some accounts on the base of their relevance to different aspects of the research.

[191] Besides, while some codes reflected the content examined such as for instance 'Mafia usury system', others were developed on the base of the research background. Thus, although some informants did not use the term clientelism, their accounts were interpreted through such notion.

Once the entire data was coded, a further analytical step involved a closer look at the codes previously created and their potentially links so to generate more comprehensive themes. Being in mind the research aims and questions, among the codes regarding the pre-crisis period, some were clustered together under themes such as 'the local partitocracy' -- 'roots of the crisis' – 'quality of democracy' – 'clientelistic politics' – 'politics and corruption'. In the same way, codes regarding the crisis of the early 1990s or the so-called Second Republic were grouped together under themes such as 'the causes of the crisis' – 'reaction to the crisis' – 'politics: similarities/dissimilarities 1st-2nd Republic'[192] – 'old vs new clientelism' etc. Next, each theme was checked again both the codes that composed it and some extracts of the data labelled under those codes so to verify whether or not codes and extracts were relevant to the theme.

A final analytical step involved the development of a sort of thematic map linking themes together so to guide the development of the empirical chapters. In this regards, themes were linked, first, following the before-during-after the crisis scheme discussed in chapter 1 so to provide a chronological order between them, and, second, on the base of their potential correlation. Accordingly, for examples, clear links were found between themes such as 'partitocracy', 'roots of the crisis', 'the causes of the crisis', 'clientelistic politics'; 'political corruption' and 'organised crime'; 'clientelistic politics' and 'quality of democracy' etc.

During the development of the empirical chapters, the sector within which the informants operated, being that the local political or judicial system, or the economic market was taken into account so to first compare extracts provided by informants operating in the same sector and subsequently extracts provided by informants belonging to different ones.

[192] Similarly, codes such as 'racketeering system' – 'mafia and the economy' – 'mafia and politics' – 'mafia and violence' – 'Cosa nostra in Catania vs Palermo' were subsequently gathered under the theme 'organised crime'.

Ultimately, especially in regards to the informants' descriptive accounts, a comparison was made with the secondary source of information selected for this research[193].

4.5 Ethics

The study was guided by the ethical principles on research with human participants set out by Middlesex University. All interviews were conducted in participants' offices or public places such as cafes and bars. Each participant was sent a Participation Information Sheet by email which explained that data would be treated with confidentiality and be kept anonymously in a secure computer file stored in locked rooms. Additionally, before each interview a Consent Form was signed by both the researcher and the participant.

As the research focused on the participants' own perception, re-construction and interpretation of the events under analysis, personal and/or sensitive data were not involved so reducing ethical issues. Moreover, participants were assured that no information which could be used to identify them would be made available to anyone outside the researchers responsible for the study. Participants' names were concealed, unless prior consent was obtained. However, if circumstances should change for a participant, the consent can be re-negotiated and anonymity maintained. Each participant was assigned a code which exclusively indicated her/his field of expertise, avoiding any information that could help to identify the informant. Finally, any document that links a code with a name will be destroyed at the end of the research.

Codes:

- For the political sector the code is: P1-P2-P3 and so on
- For the economic sector the code is: E1-E2-E3 and so on
- For the social sector the code is: S1-S2-S3 and so on

[193] See note 142 in this chapter

- For the justice system the cose is : J1-J2-J3 and so on
- For the media the code is: M1-M2-M3 and so one
- For the academic respondent the code is: A1-A2-A3 and so on

4.6 Conclusion

The empirical phase of this research has adopted a qualitative approach, based on the epistemological model of *constructivism*. This model implies the way people construct the social reality in which they live and it focuses on their perceptions, explanations, beliefs and point of views. The choice of a qualitative method arose from the explorative nature of the research which focuses on obtaining, on the one hand, information that could not be found in the current literature and, on the other hand, patterns of interpretation and explanation concerning the event under examination. The sampling strategy, as is often the case in qualitative studies, was a purposive one. More specifically, experts operating in one of the institutional realms involved in the crisis (politics, justice system, economy, society and media) were selected for in-depth interviews. This, therefore, created a heterogeneous sample from which to collect different perspectives with the final aim being to compare them establishing level of similarities and/or dissimilarities. During the fieldwork, which lasted 4 months and was conducted in Catania and its province, 39 interviews were given.

At the analytical stage, the focus was not so much on non-verbal communication as is the case with narrative interview, but rather on thematic units. Accordingly, data was ordered on the base of keywords, themes and issues with the purpose of forming a list of topics and subsequently a thematic comparison between paragraphs and secondary source of information so to obtain different perspectives on the topic under investigation.
The selection of participants was based on the researcher's judgement and both personal network and snowballing technique was used to access them. Finally, the research was

conducted in accordance with the ethical principles (anonymity and confidentiality) set out by the School of Law at Middlesex University of London.

Chapter 5

The First Republic in Catania

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the first of three which together form the empirical part of the present study. Similarly to the national-scale analysis, the chapters follow the procedural matrix designed in chapter 1. Accordingly, chapter 5 aims at exploring the democratic system operating in Catania during the First Republic period so to grasp what went into crisis by the early 1990s; consequently, chapter 6 deals with the causes/anomalies that triggered the crisis at local level, to then identify those actors who analysed 'what went wrong' and those who expressed a 'request for change'. Finally, chapter 7 looks at the development of the so-called Second Republic in the city so to establish degrees of continuity and/or discontinuity between this latter and the old regime.

The chapters are designed so to correlate the national scale analysis with what emerged firstly from the in-depth interviews given to local experts and secondly on those available and pertinent sources such as judicial, institutional and socioeconomic reports, local and national newspapers articles[194]. Moreover, the focus is on those areas mainly involved in the crisis of the early 1990s; namely the city political system, its economy and society and the aim is to determine whether or not the crisis initiated a transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics and with that whether or not it increased or decreased the quality of democracy in the city.

[194] However, as stated in chapter 1, in designing and developing chapter 5, the research could not but take into account the comprehensive analysis carried out by Caciagli in *Democrazia Cristiana e Potere nel Mezzoggiorno* (1977), on the dominant role played by the local Dc over the city political, economic and social sphere up until the mid-1970s. (See also: Caciagli and Mattina, 1979).

At the same time though, this research would make bricks without straw if it would not also include in its analysis the role played by the local Mafia clans[195] in the city and whether or not this was affected by the events of the early 1990s. Ultimately, it is necessary not only to look at each area individually but more importantly to identify their correlations and how or if these changed during the period under observation.

Thus, here the aim is to explore the origins and development of the partitocratic system at local level and identify its impact on the quality of democracy in the city. Accordingly, section 5.1 will look at the rise of the so-called mass clientelistic parties and the hegemonic role played by the local Dc among them. As suggested by findings, during the economic boom of the 1960s, politics was transformed into clientelism thanks to both the expansion of the public sector and the availability of vast state transfers. This transformation, on the one side, affected the stability of the local government and the transparency of its official actions at the expense of its level of responsiveness and accountability and, on the other side, created and exacerbated social disparities through the unequal distribution of particularistic benefits (Caciagli, 1977) which directly determined the socio-economic compositions in the city. Then, in line with what occurred at national level, the section will conclude by focusing on the rise of corruption by the early 1980s and at the degeneration of the system until its collapse.

Subsequently, section 5.2 will explore the way the mass clientelistic parties affected the quality and competitiveness of the city economic market. In this regard, a notion debated with informants is the one of 'power block'[196] provided by Caciagli and Mattina (1979) to describe the nets of alliances the local Dc established with the dominant economic and

[195] Less famous than its counter-part in Palermo, the rise of *Cosa Nostra* in Catania, along with other autonomous syndicates, goes back to the late 1960s (Antimafia Parliamentary Commission, 1996)
[196] With this notion, the two authors describe the combination of groups and social classes which in the local context have a position of dominance and which draw the greatest advantage by means of governing the party majority.

professional groups around the public-financed urban development of the city, often nicknamed by informants as 'the sack of Catania' due to its unregulated and speculative nature. The lack of a ratified urban plan did in fact triggered a sort of 'normative uncertainty' that saw, on the one side, the ruling political elite exchanging the allocation of resources and contracts with electoral support and, on the other side, a restricted groups of entrepreneurs and professionals who, thanks to their proximity to the political power, could monopolise the market and multiple their profit margins exponentially (Fava, 1991).

Ultimately, as stressed by some informants, such vast flow of public funds orbiting around the urban development soon started to lure the appetites of the local *Cosa Nostra* clan which by the end of the 1970s managed to acquire a place in the economic market of the city and a role within the power block governing it.

Accordingly, organised crime in Catania had perfected the game. While in Palermo *Cosa Nostra*, led by the *Corleonesi* clan, began a frontal attack against the state decimating an entire leadership[197], in Catania the local boss, Benedetto Santapaola, adopted a soft strategy of collusion with the local authorities (Antimafia Parliamentary Commission, Report 1996).

As it will be discussed later, all these factors combined lead to the development of an economic market mostly sustained by public resources and governed by electoral and speculative criteria that inevitably prevented the development of alternative industrial activities and of a competitive entrepreneurial class.

5.1 A Christian Democrats regime

5.1.1 Multi-layered clientelism

As mentioned above, the partitocratic system in Catania was essentially clientelistic. Yet, to fully grasp its structure and working principles and, more importantly, its impact on

[197] Between 1979 and 1992 dozens between judges, prosecutors, police officers, journalist, politicians and entrepreneurs were killed by the *Corleonesi* clan (see also Lupo, 1993; Dickie, 2004).

the quality of democracy and socio-economic composition of the city the research proposes the notion of multi-layered clientelism. As stressed by Caciagli (1977), the local political parties and especially the local Dc not only distributed benefits according to particularistic criteria but also and more importantly in an unequal way so to confirm their clients high or low social status[198]. Thus, while parties established an asymmetrical relationship with the underprivileged masses belonging both to the city small bourgeois and sub-proletarian classes[199], they provided on the contrary, a more horizontal, more au pair one with those powerful clients who, due to their privileged position, could offer to the party greater electoral support[200].

Differently than in the rest of the country, this system was not only monopolised by the local Dc but more importantly by only one of its faction, the Dorotea one, led by the Dc leader, Antonino Drago[201], who directly and/or indirectly governed the city for 30 years (Fava, 1991). In line with the partitocratic logic, although Drago was elected twice president of Catania province (in 1958 and 1961) and subsequently city mayor in 1964, his political strength lay and grew within the party apparatus from where he could mediate between clients and local public authorities.

Drago, along with others local Dc bosses in South Italy, benefited from that transformation of the party, led by the national secretary Fanfani in 1954, into an independent mass

[198] As suggested by Ippolito-O'Donnell, the practice of clientelism affects political equality as the most fragile social class have not the sufficient autonomy to formulate their preferences or opportunities engage in political participation (Ibid: 15).

[199] As the author claims, due to the lack of an industrialization and permanent occupation in the city there was not a proletarian class but rather a marginalised sub-proletarian one with little occupational opportunities, often employed in the black economy and/or engaged in little and big criminal activities.

[200] In this respect Caciagli and Mattina (1979) argue that "the selection and distribution of these resources must be accomplished with the aim of conserving the equilibrium of the existing social system. The latter is and must remain a system of inequalities" (Ibid: 261). Similarly, Graziano (1977) claims that in doing so parties promoted a 'dis-organic integration and exclusivism' that "tends to preserve social fragmentation and disorganization" (Ibid: 5)

[201] Drago is, with small doubt, the most local influential political figure of the First Republic. As a pure 'professional politicians' Drago, who was an engineer, became his political career through and thanks to the local Dc. He also hold prestigious governmental office in Rome during the 1970s and 1980s.

organisation. On the contrary, though, as claimed by Caciagli (1977), in Catania, as in other southern Italian cities[202], the party imaged by its secretary was instead converted into a mass clientelistic party where with the term 'mass' it is not meant the expansion of the party's organisation in society through processes of integration and mobilization, but rather a sort of fake modernisation process in which new forms of mobilization (the mass party) were exploited to expand and multiply old clientelistic practices[203]. In so doing, as commented by informant M4:

"it was created an alternative social organisation which functioned on the base of personal affiliations, with its own alternative norms, principles and regulations which nullified the rule of law. This parallel and informal system was soon transversally recognised and accepted by the most, beyond class differences and therefore it became a customary, a common habit, the real existing system of rules in this city". (M4).

In structural terms, Drago's faction soon assumed a pyramidal[204] shape so that the leader, from the peak, could mediate between client's particularistic and therefore conflicting demands, establish tasks and roles for his army of professional politicians (Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999; Hopkin 2002-2006) and control their actions and unscrupulous ambitions (Caciagli and Mattina, 1979).

These latter were described by informants as middle-figures with no occupation, with poor socioeconomic backgrounds, small ideological or programmatic motivation who saw in their

[202] On the development of the Dc in the south see also Graziano (1977); Ginsborg (1996-2001); Briquet (2009); Mattina (2007)

[203] Graziano (1977) and Hopkin (2006) suggest, moreover, that the rise of this new mass clientelisitc parties was favoured by the great geographical mobility and urbanisation of the late 1950s that put into crisis the old agrarian patron-clients ties and left the new urban masses in need of occupation.

[204] On the pyramidal structure assumed by clientelistic system see also Muno (2012); Varraich (2015)

political activity the only opportunity for a stable occupation and social upgrade. As informant P1 claimed in fact;

"*in those years occurred an authentic proletarisation of the political class, an anthropological revolution, because while the old notables hold their political power thanks to their personal prestige and resources, the new political class, regardless of their social and/or economic status, did it thanks to their fidelity to the party and activities within and for it; so, differently than in the past, everyone, especially those with no other occupation, could have a go*" (P1).

Drago began to build his leadership by getting control over the party through the vast number of Dc sections he spread all over the city. These sections were in fact exploited to recruit his professional politicians, lure clients and launch an unregulated[205] membership campaign aimed at collecting the highest number of members so to reinforce the power of his faction within the party[206]. Once this former was under his control, Drago climbed furtherly by conquering the most strategic local authorities from where he could control resources and services allocation[207]. Yet, as stressed by informant M8, the electoral management of the city public agencies meant that these gradually substituted the party sections, which were by then solely used to inflate party memberships, as the place where clients met with brokers.

[205] On the illicit nature of Drago's membership campaign see Saladino in *L'ora,* 18 July 1973 (cited in Caciagli, 1977; 115)

[206] In regards to the Dc membership campaign of those years, Caciagli (1977) claims its clientelistic nature could be deducted by the a high number of members/clients who moved their membership from one to the other section according to the patrons they were linked to rather than according to ideological or political orientations.

[207] By 1964 when the Drago was elected mayor of Catania, his current was able to govern the local council, the Dc provincial secretary, six para-public bodies, the board of directors of the two major hospitals, the gas and public transport municipalised companies, the provincial tourist authority, the chamber of commerce, the consortium for the industrial development, the consortium for public housing and the opera house (Nicolosi, 1989).

"The council, along with all the other city public offices, ceased to be places where it was organised and planned the administration of the city; on the contrary, every public office was controlled by a politician who would exploit it as a market to exchange favours with clients" (A2)

The control over public offices, in fact, gave to Drago's faction the possibility to multiple its clientelistic appeal to a broad variety of clients by offering an as much broad variety of benefits. By controlling the board of directors of a big hospital, for instance, the faction, to increased its electoral base, disposed of a consistent amount of temporary workplaces to offer to underprivileged clients as well as of the possibility to provide both internal mobility for those clients working at the hospital and the actual health services for all those citizen in need of . In so doing, informant M2 claimed that:

"*people were forced to participate to the game run by the patrons if they wanted to receive a job or a medical examination. If you needed to do a medical visit in hospital, in fact, rather than call the booking office you would have tried to contact a politician, if you knew any, who would have called the head physician of the hospital who, in turn, had the job thanks to that politician. In this way, you were promptly visited after a few days; the amount of day ultimately depended from how powerful was the politician you had contacted* (M2).

Besides, beyond these asymmetric exchanges, the party could also established horizontal links with the major chiefs of surgery, members of that privileged class, who provided great political support than any lay-clients[208]. The party in exchange greased their career as respondent P3 recalled:

[208] In regards to the relationship between these privileged and powerful clients and political patrons see also Kusche (2013) and Santoro (2014)

"*I remember once during a council meeting, while some Christian Democrats were debating the opportunity to appoint a head-physician, one of them pointed out that the candidate had not the professional expertise required by the position. Yet, another one of them replied by saying: 'well, it does not matter, we will give him a prompter on his side'. Clearly all this means the end of meritocracy and the use of a hospital as electoral reservoir rather than as a service provider. You need to multiply this for any public office in the city and you will get what power these patrons had.*" (P3)

The famous scandal erupted at Vittorio Emanuele Hospital by the end of the 1960s is emblematic of the effects a system such this can cause. Exploited as clientelistic reservoir, the hospital was temporarily closed in 1969 due to the critical hygienic standards and inefficiency of most of its departments. Massimo Gaglio, a manager at the hospital, so described those events: "all employees were recruited by clientelistic criteria, supplies and contracts were domesticated; some surgical departments were left inactive for at least 40 days before each election. 12 out of 25 head-doctors belong to the Dc. The maternity ward and the radiology department shut down for 5 months due to structure collapse; the police throw tear gas against the nurses who don't receive a salary from months, mothers take away their premature babies from the incubators, the army occupied the hospital for 6 day and the president resigned" (Gaglio, 1974 cited in Caciagli, 1977; 323-324). Ultimately as recalled by informant E2:

"*there was even a usury system organised by some employees representing the Dc's grass root in that hospital so to loan money to those other employees who didn't receive their salary for a long time due to the frequent hospital budgetary crises"* (E2)

Despite it may seem exceptional, the Vittorio Emanuele case was not an isolated one. As it will be examined in section 5.2, in fact, the public housing consortium (IACP)[209] was another office exploited by the local political power to feed its multi-layered clientelistic system. The same unintegrated mass that urbanised the city, beyond medical assistance, had to negotiate in fact a temporary or permanent accommodation with the patrons who could also exploit the consortium itself and the companies receiving the contracts as a further reserve of workspaces and therefore of votes. At the same time, though, the party could conquer the support of the entrepreneurs operating in the construction industry who found in the political class a formidable ally for their speculations.

By fragmenting resources allocation plans such as the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* into particularistic and unequal distribution of a variety of benefits, Drago's faction hindered a truly economic development, for which those resources were originally destined, and, therefore, made its mediation and discretional power indispensable to access social and economic opportunities. This point was expressed by informant A2 in the following term:

"*it was a system which functioned through electoral mechanisms and the capillary control over any social component and every single individual. It was a system able to keep under check in particular the most fragile social classes and maintain their socioeconomic status emarginated and in need of political mediation.*" (A2).

Similarly, informant A3, in open contrast with a positive representation of clientelism stressed that although:

"*it has been seen as a valid form of political organisation and participation in underdeveloped areas, in reality, clientelistic politic, by promoting an asymmetric and particularistic relationship with citizens, favours only individual and unequal mobilization,*

[209] Instituto Autonomo Case Popolari

promote self-interest over collective one, exclude large part of society and postpone rather than solve conflicts[210]" (A3).

Hence, the same actors and agencies who were supposed to launch the economic development in the city were the same who largely benefited and contributed to its lack. The piles of billions of Liras the central state regularly sent were strategically invested and fragmented to artificially expand the local public sector to accommodate more clients on the base of partisan and factional loyalties and finance the construction industry. The outcome was the formation of a labyrinthine and unproductive administrative sector composed by a myriad of competing, rather than cooperating, agencies which functions and responsibilities often overlapped with each other. Needless to say, all this left no funds to support long-term and coordinated plans that could had supplied the city with those infrastructures and industrial districts so desperately needed to trigger any economic growth.

So far these developments posit serious concerns in terms of quality of democracy. The clientelistic local partitocratic system, apart from openly violating the principle of equality[211] with its unequal distribution of particularistic benefits, it also scored poorly in most of the remaining dimensions discussed in chapter 1 (subsection 1.1.3). Given the informal and covert nature of clientelistic exchanges (Hopkin, 2006), Drago's current was essentially inimical not only to vertical accountability and responsiveness, as many voters lacked both the autonomy to express preferences or to punish and the possibility to control and monitor administrative actions, but also to horizontal accountability given that the faction had placed affiliates in those strategic position of power and control.

[210] This last point is also supported by Caciagli and Mattina (1979) who claim that "the party succeeded in containing social tensions by either postponing the explosion of conflicts or by transforming them into corporate conflicts or into individual competitions." (Ibid; 270)

[211] Besides, clientelism violates the principle of equality even in terms of equal right to exercise control over policies and the officials who make them (Diamond and Morlino, 2004).

Yet, as the next subsection will discuss, by the mid-1970s both the increasing number of clients and a contraction in state transfer following the international economic crisis of those years[212] jeopardise the integrity of Drago's pyramid which rather than represent the end of clientelistic politics in the city, gave way to three new developments. First the system became multi-pyramidal which inevitably increased competition between parties and fraction at the expense of governmental stability and with that responsiveness, Second, the problematic increase in number of clients and decreased amount of resources was soon solved by resorting to corrupt practices to gain extra resources to invest. This in line with the rest of the country, gave way to that evolution from professional to business politicians discussed in chapter 3[213]. Finally, the fragmentation of Drago's pyramid in smaller and more fragile ones provided the chance to a restricted group of economic actor to gain leverage over the local public authorities.

.1.2 From clientelism to corruption

Being the legitimacy and integrity of the Drago's pyramid strictly dependent on resources availability it couldn't but enter into a crisis when the latter became scarce. As Panebianco (1988) claims, in fact, "leaders sleep peacefully as long as they can assure continuity in the clientele's remuneration, for their power is recognized as "legitimate" by a satisfied majority. But if, for one reason or another, continuity in the flow of benefits is interrupted or becomes uncertain, an 'authority crisis' is triggered off in the party" (Ibid; 40). At the same time though, those brokers Drago had selected, trained and placed both in the party apparatus and in the local public offices began to autonomously access and control resources, build their own clientelistic clusters and establish autonomous alliances with

[212] Besides, as claimed by Golden (2010), in 1974 a public referendum was organised to reduce the public funds given to parties. This, on the one side, destabilised their clientelistic system and, on the other side, forced political actors to resort to corruption practices.

[213] Similarly then in the rest of the country, even in Catania the 'professional politicians began 'business politician' (see chapter 3 note 85).

powerful economic and professional actors in that directly challenging their own leader (Caciagli, 1977). Besides, by the end of the 1970s, the Dorotea's *modus operandi* was adopted by both minor and oppositional parties in that increasing even more the competition between patrons for accessing positions and control over resources distribution.
As pointe out by informant J3, due to the colonisation of public authorities, the conflict between parties and factions was handed down into the administrative system and converted into a conflict between public offices which ended to obstruct one another.

During the 1980s, the council had become a battlefield; when the different factions were not able to reach a deal to appoint the presidency of a hospital, for example, the hospital services would have been suspended until an agreement would have been made. Same goes for any contract the council had to assign, not water supply if a deal was not reach, no rubbish collection or roads maintenance until the battle was not over. The entire city was the hostage of its political class". (J3)

Yet, the reduction of resources if, on one side, put into crisis Drago's pyramid and increased the competition between patrons, on the other side, it did not undermine their clientelistic appeals. On the contrary, in fact, the availability of smaller resources increased the occupational crisis of the city and in that the competition between clients for whom the political mediation became even more crucial than before[214].
Moreover, the availability of less resources was compensated, in line with the national-scale analysis (Della Porta and Vannucci, 1997-1999; Singer, 2009; Golden, 2010; Muno, 2012; Vannucci and Sberna, 2013; Varraich, 2014), with what some informants described as an

[214] This point is also supported by Caruso (2013) who claims that clientelism is strengthen rather than weakened by scarcity in resources as this latter is the precise reason why clients need to search for patrons to access them.

endemic system of corruption to extract illicit funds to invest in the clientelistic market. In this respect, informant J2 highlighted that:

"*the system began soon so endemic and entrepreneurs so accustomed that the illegal exchanges didn't take place behind the scene. Once I was amazed when an entrepreneur under questioning told me that he went directly to a public administrator's house in broad daylight with the cash in a suitcase as if he was going to the cinema with a friend. I can ensure you that all the public contracts were politically manoeuvred, it was already known by everyone which companies would have won the contract; it was not a secret but a question of the size of the bribes received.*" (J2)

Similarly, Informant P4 recalled that

"*Once, at the Town Hall, I saw this colleague who was carrying a bag and so I asked him if he had been shopping and what he had bought. I was amazed when he opened the bag and it was full of notes of 100 thousands Liras. He had brought a huge bribe inside the Town Hall as the most normal thing to do. It may sounds crazy but at the Town Hall, at some point, there was a special room where all the bribes were temporarily stored and there was an employee who was guarding the room".*

As in the rest of the country, the spread of corruption triggered a further evolution of its political class which changed the motivations behind its political activity and expertise (Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999). The professional politicians who had conquered the city in the 1960s on the base of their clientelistic know-how became by the end of the 1970s 'business politicians' whom success dependent also on their ability to control public bodies to engage in corruption exchanges.

Predictably, all this worsened the quality of democracy in the city. The endemic diffusion of corruption among the city political and economic elites, eroded the integrity of

the rule of law and the transparency of the system, impeded the exercised of horizontal and vertical accountability, reduced the level of responsiveness and, echoing Della Porta and Vannucci (1999), favoured the most resourceful and well-connected groups at the expense of the most fragile and marginalized.

In this last respect, as some informants and secondary sources point out, whereas the solidity of the system under Drago management guaranteed a leading position to the political power within the power block, the diffusion of corruption along with the political fragmentation increased the leverage of a restricted group of economic actors, the so-called *Cavalieri del Lavoro*[215], who during the 1980s became to dictate the line in the management of public resources. These latter, in fact, had so exponentially grown thanks to their closeness to the local Dc, to be able by the beginning of the 1980s to established fruitful relationships with the party at both the regional and national level an in that bypass the by then weak city political power and force it to run public contract in their favour, despite enlarging the council and province deficit (Caciagli, 1977). The causes and consequences of such supremacy were described by informant J1 and P6 in the following terms:

"*A political system without a project and a solid organisation, which prioritises the accumulation of money to oil the consensus machine, needs to run always public contracts and is more keen to negotiate if not to submit its interests to the ones of the major economic actors who can pay for these contracts* ." (J1).

"*At that point, the entrepreneurs could run the show, even because the politicians became so greedy to do anything to get richer and more powerful; they began to see the relationship*

[215] Cavalieri del Lavoro is a title annually given by the President of the Republic to those who have with their activities provided occupation for many.

with more and less powerful entrepreneurs as an opportunity to do so, these latter were cows to milk, that is a bribe to ask, a fixed percentage to cash in." (Informant P6).

As it will be discussed in the next subsection, the power acquired by the economic elite of the city over its political class was just a further evolution of an alliance which was established since the 1960s around the urban development of the city. The unregulated nature of the urban boom, as above mentioned, was exploited by the political class as yet another opportunity to strengthen their clientelistic system, attacked the most speculative interests and hampered the possibility for other industrial sector to develop.

5.2 An assisted oligopoly, a concrete and criminal problem

As it was above claimed, whereas the state intervention into the southern economy was conceived to promote its development, in Catania, as in many other urban areas, resources were invested where and when it was politically and electorally rather than economically convenient. Besides, the unequal and particularistic manner with which these resources were distributed discouraged any comprehensive and coordinated economic planning and aimed at maintaining and in many cases exacerbating old economic fragilities. As suggested by informant E8, the expansion of the public sectors as a clientelistic reservoir is a perfect example of the control the latter had on the city economy:

"*In this city the local Dc built a regime thanks to the expansion of the public sector where the electoral behaviour of the employees could be better controlled. This of course mortified any private economic initiative and the few that existed disappeared. If, for example, you were a carpenter who struggled to keep open your activity because there was not a real economic market, at some point some patron would offer you a contract or even a*

temporarily[216] *occupation at the council or at some of the city hospital or municipal companies as carpenter or as gardener or whatever. In doing so, your occupational and therefore economic future would be under the patron's control* ".

A similar example of electoral rather than economic investment of resource was the failure to promote an industrial development[217] in the city, notwithstanding the copious amount of state transfers destined to it. Whereas the political elites for decades exploited such possibility as part of their electoral propaganda, according to which Catania was soon going to be the 'Milan of the south', in reality the city industrial consortium was employed, like the others local authorities, as an occupational reservoir to employ underprivileged clients and members of the party and, simultaneously, to favour members of that professional class growing around it. As Caciagli (1977) stresses, the lack of a programmatic strategy hindered the rise of productive enterprises interconnected within districts along with the development of infrastructures and services. On the contrary, the few industries created were either branches of the Northern industrial groups or small manufacturing companies orbiting, and therefore relying on, the building construction sector.

In line with what some authors (Graziano, 1977; Ginsborg, 1990; Hopkin, 2002; Mattina; 2007) stress in regards to the south, even in Catania while the failure of the agrarian reform[218] had triggered by the end of the 1950s a mass migration from rural areas to the city,

[216] As argued by Caciagli (1977), the mass employment of clients in the public administration of the city was realised mainly by providing temporal occupations so that patrons could dispose of something to promise (the extension of the contract) anytime it was electorally necessary (Ibid; 488)

[217] As some authors (Ginsborg, 1990; Trigilia, 2011; Santoro, 2014)) argue, in southern Italy the few small and medium public controlled industries centres were in reality imposed from above by the central state without any consideration of territorial and economic specificities, not by chance they soon acquired the nickname of 'Cathedrals in the desert'. Such assisted centres were largely unproductive, environmentally detrimental and more importantly largely controlled by local political elites to fuel their own clientelistic systems and mostly unable to satisfy the employment crisis triggered by the failure of the agrarian reform.

[218] As claimed by Ginsborg (1990), one of the major reason behind this failure was the large electoral consensus the Dc was receiving by those great landlords whom property interests were undermined by the reform (Ibid; 130). Besides, especially in western Sicily, such interests were also protected by the Mafia as the numerous

creating a vast housing emergency. This was exploited rather than solved by the parties by launching a politically controlled building boom that in Catania absorbed the majority of the city economic energies and gave way to an unregulated and therefore speculative development that for its utter detrimental impact on the local territory and on the urban quality of the city was unanimously named 'the Sack of Catania'.

5.2.1 The Sack of Catania

During the 1960s, the building boom was a phenomenon common to many areas of Italy as it was triggered by the economic boom and the massive migration flows that accompanied it. At the same time, many urban developments around the country acquired speculative traits and were based on the distortion of rules in favour of politically protected private interests. The Sack of Palermo described by Dickie (2004), the Sack of Naples portrayed by 'Hands over the City', a drama movie directed by Francesco Rosi at the beginning of the 1960s, the scandal behind the Sack of Rome denounced by Manlio Cacogni with his journalistic inquest in 1955 '*Capitale corrotto: nazione infetta'* (cited in Ginsborg, 1990; 247) are just the most famous examples[219].

In Catania though, the construction industry, being strongly reliant on public funds, was deliberately elected by the local Dc as the driven economic sector of the city so that the economic boom was in reality a building construction boom[220]. In this regards informant E8 claimed that:

murders of trade unionists, peasants and oppositional parties' members testified (on this see also Lupo, 1993; Dickie 2004)

[219] Besides, it would be sufficient to look at the shadowy economic rise of Silvio Berlusconi as building developer in Milan to realise that this deviant phenomenon had not latitudinal constrains (on this point see Lane 2004; Ginsborg, 2004; Stille, 2006).

[220] According to Cacliagli (1977), in fact, the local Dc played a crucial role in supporting this unique type of economic development. Many of the party's most iconic representatives acted as bridge-men to link together banks, speculators, companies, the local bureaucracy and some professional sectors (Ibid; 38-219)

"*The political class, a part from the public sector, saw in the building development of the city a great opportunity to control the economy and therefore the electorate. There was not any long-term economic strategy at stake, such decision was merely guided by electoral and political goals.*"

There is definitely a basic flaw in assigning the economic fate of an entire city to a sector which strictly depends on the local demand as is the building construction industry. Whereas during a period of general growth, as the economic boom of the 1960s, this sector could develop exponentially, once the local demand decreases, its crisis is the most likely scenario. Yet, to exploit the urban territory was the unique idea of modernization the local Dc was able to propose and, more importantly, as it will be discussed in section 5.2.2, it was a first testing ground for those long-lasting net of alliances between the political, economic and criminal dominant interests of the city (Fava, 1991).

The particularistic interests promoted by the local political power could not but perfectly meet with the private interests of both building contractors[221] and landlords who saw in the urban development an extraordinary opportunity to make substantial profits. Moreover, the centrality given to the construction industry determined the composition of the city economic market in that it favoured only the growth of a restricted number of small/medium manufacturing companies and professional figures which success in the local market was again depending from their closeness to the political power. In turn, this latter disposed of these protected businesses as yet another occupational reservoir for thousands of unskilled workers who could exchange a temporary occupation with political loyalty.

[221] As claimed by informant J1 like the 'professional politicians', most of the city contractors, as the so-called Cavalieri, had not primary capitalization to invest and therefore owed their economic success to their privileged relationship with the local Dc and the copious amount of public resources this latter controlled.

As stressed by informant S4, the fragmented and therefore competing interests behind the building boom could not be accommodated within an unique urban plan[222], on the contrary, it was rather necessary to create a sort of 'normative uncertainty' so to favour as many of those interests as possible[223].

"The lack of a unique plan and the political control over the building development had a catastrophic impact on the urban territory and on the economy of the city. Not only what was built was aesthetically ugly, but everything was developed in a disordered and uncoordinated way; this has strongly affected the urban quality of the city. Besides, such political protected market didn't encourage a free-market mentality according to which the quality of what is built is an important factor for a company to succeed. Here everything was built with low quality as entrepreneurs had not need to be competitive being the market regulated by the political power" (S4).

In addition, without any long-term and programmatic strategies the possibility to plan and realised those public works which could have equipped the city with infrastructures and services was impeded. As the local historian Salvatore Nicolosi in his *Il Caso Catania* (1989) claims, between the 1960s and 1980s, the number of public works which either took decades to be completed or were partially completed or never realised at all is astonishing[224]. Green areas, administrative and cultural centres, the runway extension to relaunch the airport, the

[222] The original city urban plan, presented to the local council in 1961 by the architect Luigi Piccinato, was not ratified until 1967. By then, however, it had been fragmented in so many detailed plans, most of which were and remained uncompleted, that it was basically unrecognisable even for its author, who refused to sign it (Fava, 1991).

[223] Accordingly, "The areas allowed to be built on, the height of the buildings, the overall cubic footage (in other words, all those parameters which determine the contractors profit margin) were established licence by licence, contractor by contractor" (Fava, 1991; 27).

[224] As the historian recalls, for example, despite the city original urban plan in 1964 included the development of a ring-road to easy the congestion between the metropolitan area and the city centre, this project disappeared when the plan had been utterly modified in 1969. However, such crucial infrastructure was regularly announced during electoral campaigns, accompanied by political proclaims in the local press, pamphlets, dioramas and feasibility studies. The ring-road was completed only in the 1990s

marina, the archaeological path, the congestion action plan and so on. “It is impossible to have a complete inventory of all the tricks people in Catania have been subjected to from the end of the 1960s to the end of the 1980s; tricks in the form of promises made and never not fulfilled, of public works started and never completed, of waste of public money. This has inevitably created a general disillusion towards public authorities” (Ibid; 205).

Similarly, the development of both private and public housing was guided by electoral and speculative criteria. During the 1960s an extraordinary number of new blocks of flats began to fill any available space in the city, any lot that could be converted into a building area by some local powerful patrons[225]. Citrus gardens, hills, coastlines, along with a consistent part of the city architectural heritage, gave space to anonymous 8 or 10 floors high buildings, while, at the same time the districts in the old city centre were left with no roads, water supply or electric power (Fava, 1991).

However, as stressed by informant A2, once the municipal territory reached a saturation point and the urban plan became operational, the building boom began to spread in the city surround, towards those little towns placed on the Mount Etna foot hills.

“*The speculative interests behind the private housing found free rein in those towns placed on the first ring of the metropolitan area as they had not any urban plan that could regulate the building development . That was the biggest urban and environmental disaster never made. In a few years it was created a dysfunctional conurbation devoid of any service, of any quality, of any attention to the peculiarities of the city territory and the process of socialization between its inhabitants.”* (A2)

[225] As Caciagli (1977) argues, the normative uncertainty created by the lack of a ratified urban plan allowed the political class to take a great number of illicit measure so to largely multiple the profits of contractors. Besides, the lack of official norms made the relationship between public authorities and building contractors a personal and private one in that the allocation of a contract was regulated by the informal power of patrons rather than by formal norms.

Although the phenomenon of conurbation, that is the merging of many towns in the suburbs of a bigger one, is part of the extension process in big cities, the so-called 'conquest of the hills' (Caciagli, 1977; Nicolosi, 1989; Fava; 1991; Gravagno, 2008) in Catania saw the development of an extended metropolitan area in the absence of any normative framework that could regulate it. Thus, while any lot was exploited to build what for speculators is the most lucrative business, dwelling units to sell, the new overpopulated suburbs[226] were devoid of any primary urban infrastructures and services[227] in that lowering the urban quality of the city and the life standards of its inhabitant, not to mention the detrimental, and for the most part beyond recover, impact on the local environment.

Ultimately, the building boom found a fertile soil in the public housing sector thanks to the control the local Dc had over the city consortium (IACP) which since the 1960s began to be regularly exploited as another multi-layered clientelistic apparatus so maintain and increase social inequalities. As argued by informant S3:

By controlling the development of the public housing, the party could guarantee huge business opportunity and therefore establish a close relationship with the powerful entrepreneurs of the city[228] *and at the same time exploit the IACP as a fruitful reservoir of consensus given the huge amount of people in need of a house*". (S3)

Accordingly, "longer the waiting list for an accommodation, more incorruptible would have been the loyalty to the political patron. That is how the IACP in Catania became the most

[226] Between 1967 and 1972, the units in the major towns surrounding the city increased of the 257 per cent and their population of the 371 per cent (Caciagli, 1977).
[227] These are roads, hospitals, schools, green areas, shops, transports, water and electricity supply and so on.
[228] In this respect Caciagli (1977) claims that: "the long-lasting and irreversible outcome of this identity of interests is the urban disorder of the city: the gutting of entire districts, the devastation of the architectural and environmental equilibrium, the unbearable congestion; and by contrary: the spiralling costs of rents, the absolute insufficiency of basic services, the degradation and abandonment of the city slums, the self-margination of large proletarian groups in peripheral districts devoid of any service" (Ibid; 216)

docile clientelistic instrument. It was important to find new building areas, to obtain loans, to make new houses and to promise them to the people." (Fava, 1991; 22).

At the same time, a further and significant aspect was stressed by informant A2 on the specific and/or anomalous urban criteria public authorities adopted to development the public housing in the city;

"*Unlikely in many other cities, in Catania a series of big public housing districts were developed from scratch outside the city territory devoid of any services including roads . This inevitably marginalized rather than integrate the most fragile social groups living there. I moreover believe that marginalization was then largely exploited by the political class anytime there was need of electoral support"* (A2).

Between the late 1950s and late 1980s, several overpopulated and often uncompleted districts were developed around the city but physically and therefore socially and economically disconnected from it. Among them, informants indicated the district of Librino as perhaps the most iconic example. Placed in the south outskirt of the city, with a population of 80.000 people, the district for decades has been the symbol of the city socioeconomic decline and among one of the most degraded urban area in all the country.
Part of the original urban plan, the feasibility of the district's project had been entrusted to one of the most successful Japanese architect at that time, Kenzo Tange who designed a sort of 'city in the city' (Nicolosi, 1989) inclusive of hospitals, schools, leisure centres, university departments, administrative offices, commercial activities and last but not least, extended green areas where residents, according to its designer, could reacquire that link with nature the industrial society had lost.

Yet, contrary to such innovative and noble intentions, whereas numerous blocks of council flats of 10-15 floors were built or partially built, those infrastructures destined to the community disappeared one by one from the initial project converting the garden city into a

slum[229]. Consequently, as stressed by the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission (Report, 1996), in Librino, as well as in many other urban areas of the city, due to its urban and socioeconomic degradation and to the weak presence of state authorities, the local mafia clans soon managed to transform the district not only into a drug-smuggling hub but also into a recruitment centre for all those underprivileged young people who hadn't concrete occupational opportunities.

However, whereas detrimental for the city urban quality, the building boom provided a great chance for the establishment of an 'identity of interests' between the political power and the Cavalieri who thanks to their privileged relationship with the former managed to monopolise the industrial sector and with that to become extraordinary powerful economic actors. As it will be discussed in the next section, the Cavalieri's economic empires, not only embodied a perfect example of public assisted entrepreneurial monopolism but they and their economic empire represented the pole of attraction for the economic ambitions of the local *Cosa Nostra* clan with which they establish a prolific and long-lasting alliance for more than a decade.

5.2.2 Political assisted economy and organised crime

The speculative nature of the build boom above described not only determined the composition of the local economic market, but, as informant A2 argued, it also triggered the rise of the Cavalieri's monopolistic and protected entrepreneurial cartel[230] which strength lie on their political affiliation and therefore privileged accessibility to public resources[231].

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[229] On the unregulated development of Librino see Gravagno (2008) *Dei Paesaggi di Ellenia e di Altre Storie Simili* (Volume 2; Chapter 7)

[230] The control this monopolistic cartel gained over the public financed construction industry shaped the local economic market in line with the hierarchy of Drago's pyramid. As the Dc leader in the political field, the Cavalieri at the peak of the pyramidal market, could include and/or exclude and therefore control all the remaining small and medium companies operating in the sector.

[231] In this respect, Santoro (2014) describes the relationship between the southern political power and economic elites as orbiting around public resources and essentially clientelistic that is informal, private and regulated by private rather than public interests.

"*Since the beginning of the 1960s, any company in order to get any contract and therefore to survive had to have its own representative inside the local institutions. So those entrepreneurs who were capable to build a close relationship with some influential politicians were those who obtained the majority of the contracts and succeeded in the local market. At the same time, though, any politician who wanted to thrive his/her career needed to find a referent in the entrepreneurial sector so to dispose of extra resources and electoral support. The Cavalieri were the most successful in that system, they managed to monopolise such informal relationship with the political power and they did it for more than thirty years.*" (A2)

Similarly, informant J1 described the economic success of these powerful entrepreneurs in the following terms:

"These entreprenurs had a poor economic background, one of them used to work as builder; at the beginning they had not capital to invests therefore their primary capital accumulation came from the public resources controlled by the IACP. Once they obtained the first contracts, by lowering the quality and costs of both construction materials and labour, they made important profits which allowed them to reinfoced their relationship with the political power and to monopolise the market" (J1).

Accordingly, during the building boom, the Cavalieri stood out in intercepting the 61 percent of all the public housing tenders in the city along with the major contracts run by the province (Caciagi; 1977; Fava, 1991)[232]. As in a self-perpetuating process, more the contracts these groups gained bigger their capacity to prevail in the market became, until the point that

[232] As reported by Fava (1991), in 1982, Finocchiaro (one of the four Cavalieri), in an interview to the national newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* said: "Last September [1981] we meet with Constanzo, Rendo and Graci (the other three Cavalieri) and we established an iron deal; we will leave the small contracts to the other companies, so they can survive, then we are going to look after all the rest!" (*Corriere della Sera* 31 March 1982)

they were the only companies equipped to realise the major works and, due to their growing capitals, to dissuade potential competitors (Caciagli, 1977)[233].

More importantly, thanks to this exclusive position in the local market, in a few years the Cavalieri become to diversify their activities[234], build up significant economic empires and conquer important contracts all over Sicily. This allowed them to weave new nets of alliances and reciprocity with both the regional and national political class and in that to bypass the local one. Thus, whereas during the 1960s, was the political power that lead the show, by the 1970s it was the management boards of these entrepreneurs' companies that dictated the guiding line[235]. Besides, in a territory with dramatic unemployment levels whoever can provide occupation for thousands of people acquires an enormous leverage towards both society and political organisations. Accordingly, both the city trade unions and oppositional parties, such as the Pci, indulged rather than oppose the Cavalieri economic success[236].

Ultimately, though, as stressed by several informants, the vast amount of public resources invested in the construction industry did also captivate the ambitions of the local *Cosa Nostra* clan that saw in the 'normative uncertainty' of the building boom a great

[233] Moreover, as the author explains, anytime these companies won a contract they would receive up until the 50 percent of the total cost and from there they would multiple their profits by inserting numerous variants to the original project so to postpone the completion of the work and make its cost grow. Clearly, " to achieve all this, it is necessary that a series of people and authorities decide that resources are not anymore sufficient; this both inside the local office, the ministry for public work and the civil engineering. The contractors' profit therefore depends from the goodwill of these authorities and in particular from the one of the IACP"

[234] Accordingly, by the end of the 1970s they owned banks, hotels, thousands of flats, newspapers, TV networks, agriculture estates and so on (Fava, 1991).

[235] This point is also supported by Gravagno (2008) who claim that at that point "the Cavalieri could decide in their offices which infrastructure had to be made in the region and how to divide the public contracts among themselves" (Ibid; 195).

[236] On the inability of the local Pci to oppose the city power block see Chapter 6 – Section 6.1.1 . Moreover, on the weaknesses and failures of the regional Pci in Sicily to oppose the Dc' system of corruption and Cosa Nostra see Fava (2009)

opportunity to evolve from a parasitic to a symbiotic stage[237] and become the military deterrent in defence of the interests composing the city power block.

To fully appreciate the role played by organised crime in Catania one could look at the distinction between 'criminal enterprises' and 'power systems' suggested by Ruggiero (2010). Accordingly, while the former are organisations mainly engaged in illicit businesses, the latter, such as the Sicilian *Cosa Nostra* or Neapolitan *Camorra,* have the ability to simultaneously operate in both the illicit and licit markets, "exert territorial control and constitute 'power systems' which transcend conventional criminality" (Ibid; 89).

More importantly though, for a criminal organisation to constitute a power system and therefore operate in the licit market means above all the need to reach and access the official economic and political realm. The nature of the relationships a criminal organisation can establish with these formers has been the subject of a long debate and has been portrayed by the Italian literature as a 'grey area' (Amadore, 2007; Sciarrone, 2009; Sciarrone 2011a-2011b; Sciarrone and Storti, 2019)[238] in which the interest of the underworld meet and overlap with the one of the overworld.

Such encounter can be fully recognised if organised crime is conceived as a social organisation formed not only by individuals who share a similar cultural background (association) but also by individuals who can temporarily or permanently share the same activities and interests but not necessary belong to the organisation or are cultural and social homogeneous to it (Ruggiero, 2010). These second type of relationships, while do not belittle the role played by the military aspect of organised crime, deal more with the ability of organised crime groups to combine 'conventional criminality with a variety of white

[237] As argued by Sciarrone (2014), by infiltrating the licit economy, those Mafia clans engaged only in parasitic activities such as extortions, usury and robbery, become to legally operate in the market and in that to establish symbiotic relationship with political and/or economic authorities.

[238] Differently, in the English literature this term refers to white collar crime and the continuum between legal and illegal realm (see also Hobbs, 2013; Tombs and Whyte, 2003-2015; Ruggiero, 2013-2017).

collar crime' (Ibid; 90)[239].

Thus, contrary to the basic narratives that depict organised crime as an isolated evil entity governed by internal cultural and behavioural codes and exclusively composed by violent individuals who impose their threat on an otherwise wealth and democratic society (Falcone and Padovani, 1991)[240], when criminal group enter into partnership with political and economic market they "learn' the techniques and the rationalisations of their white collar counterparts" and "take advantage of the fact that in some sector of the official economy unorthodox practices and illegal behaviour are widespread" (Ibid; 90)[241].

In line with this accounts and as some informants and institutional sources corroborated, organised crime in Catania found a fertile soil to grow at easy rather than an obstacle in the widespread system of clientelistic informal exchanges and corruption practices in which both the city political, institutional and economic classes were largely involved.. As stressed by the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission (Report, 1996), while in Palermo *Cosa Nostra* based its power on the exercised of violence, decimating in a few years an entire leadership, in Catania "by applying the methods dictated by its undisputed boss Benedetto Santapaola, it has demonstrated a particular inclination for the business world; has developed a precise strategy to infiltrate local institutions; has searched and

[239] In a similar way, Bezlov and Gounev (in Gounev and Ruggiero, 2012) argue that "if and when criminal groups manage to extend their activities beyond illicit markets, thus acquiring a respected public face, their ability to corrupt politicians increases. Members of the groups, in such cases, can openly interact with representatives of official bodies. On the other hand, when direct links emerge between politicians and criminals involved in illicit markets, the latter have also acquired significant legitimate economic power, which allows them to engage in corrupt practices with a view to committing more sophisticated 'white-collar' offences" (Ibid: 32-33).

[240] Similarly Kleeman (2014) argues that ""organized crime does not operate within a social vacuum, but interacts with its social environment; consequently we should have a thorough understanding of social ties and social interactions if we want to explain it" (Ibid: 5).

[241] Accordingly, it is the "widespread corruption within the social, economic and political sphere that attracts organised criminal groups, encouraging them to participate in corrupt exchange and indirectly boosting their various illicit activities" (Ibid; 102). Similarly Sciarrone (2014) identify in a weak sense of legality and institutional ethos, widespread corruption and low moral costs those condition that favour organised crime to access the overworld..

obtained a mutualistic relationship with the major entrepreneurial groups. To do so the clan and its boss had to be able to deal with entrepreneurs and politicians and to give up any strategy of frontal attack against the state" (Ibid; 7)[242].

As claimed by Informant P6 this strategy led to a

"*pact of reciprocity between all these components each of which took advantages and guaranteed protections; a system in which everyone helped the others because everyone offered something to the common cause. It was a system based on a sort of reciprocity in terms of protection, in terms of solidarity between its members*." (P6)[243]

Whereas in Palermo some members of a 'virtuous minority' (Dickie, 2004) began to reveal and oppose the increasing power *Cosa Nostra* was acquiring in the city, in Catania its presence was unanimously denied by the city institutional and political authorities (Fava, 1991)[244]. This refusal, however, was challenged in 1982 by the prefect of Palermo, Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa[245], who in an interview given to the daily newspaper *La Repubblica*[246] claimed that *Cosa Nostra* clan in Catania had acquired by contrast significant power within the syndicate and thanks to this the Cavalieri's companies managed to obtain the most important and rich public contracts all over the island.

Besides, similar allegations were reiterated by the end of the 1980s firstly by Luigi Rossi, at that time chief of police in Catania, who wrote to the city public prosecutor a

[242] This resembles what Ruggiero (2010) defines aa a post-mafia stage according to which "in the past we could identify some figures of the official world who were 'external' allies of the mafia; now it is the mafia which is external to the illicit business of the ruling elite" (Ibid; 102).

[243] As stated by the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission (Report 1996), in fact, "in Catania at the beginning of the 1980s *Cosa Nostra*, political institutions and the dominant economic interests had struck a stable and strong deal consecrated by the simultaneous presence of their representatives in official events"(Ibid; 15)

[244] As the author argues, until the early 1990s the local institutional authorities unanimously denied the development and evolution of *Cosa Nostra* in the city despite the clan during the 1980s killed hundreds of rivals, extorted the 80 percent of economic activities in the city and infiltrated its economic market.

[245] The prefect was soon after killed along with his wife by a *Cosa Nostra* squad in Palermo the 3rd of September 1982 after only 100 days from his appointment.

[246] *Come combatto contro la Mafia*-Giorgio Bocca *La Reppublica* 10th of August 1982

detailed report[247] on the 'symbiotic collusion' between the Cavalieri and Santapaola's clan and secondly, by Antonino Calderone, one of the most influential mafia bosses in the city who turn state witness in 1987 and described in details the relationship *Cosa Nostra* had with the city public and economic authorities[248].

However, notwithstanding Rossi's report and Calderone's testimony led to some judicial investigations these ended into a series of acquittals. The 28th of March 1991, in fact, just one year before the judicial earthquake triggered by the Clean hands anti-corruption investigations in Milan, the investigating judge Luigi Russo acquitted the Cavalieri by overturning the accusation of collusion with mafia into an inevitable imposition they had suffered and been forced to accept. According to the judge's line of reasoning, while perhaps from an ethical point of view the entrepreneurs who have taken a 'no conflictual' solution to the mafia impositions may be judged, from a judicial point of view "this behaviour is not the result of an autonomous choice, but rather one of the no conflictual solutions taken due to a situation not attributable to their initiative" (Fava, 1991; 169).

The dilemma whether the Cavalieri were victims or complicit of the mafia found a final judicial response only in 1996, just after the fall of the First Republic, during the so-called *Orsa Maggiore* trial from which, contrary to the previous verdict, clearly emerged that rather than suffer the mafia protection the Cavalieri had voluntary searched for and cultivated a stable collusion with it, with reciprocal benefits for both sides[249].

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[247] Rossi in his report defines the Cavalieri as public dangerous and suggests to the public prosecutor to confiscate their goods as the entrepreneurs were not only highly corrupted but more importantly deeply colluded with the local mafia clan thanks to which they monopolises the market and built their large economic empires (*L'Unita* 3rd of October 1989 cited in Fava 1991; 68)

[248] Calderone describes the mafia in Catania during the 1980s in the following terms "Inside the mafia there is anything. A part from the judges and the police caps, there are any kind of people, infiltrated in any side of society. The Mafioso is like a spider. He builds nets of friendship, of acquaintances, of obligations." (Alarcchi, 1992; 27). The ex-mafia boss also confirms that the Cavalieri employed the mafia as a military deterrent to protect their business and provided large economic opportunity in exchange.

[249] On this beneficial relationship see also the Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission Report (1996; 13-17)

As informant S1 claimed, in those years there was a great difference that lays between those who suffer the Mafia's racketeering system and those who takes extended advantages from it

"*At that time, the real victims were those few entrepreneurs who tried to challenge the Cavalieri's monopolistic system and reported the extortions imposed by the mafia. Those very few brave people had however their warehouses and building sites burned to the ground and their lives and the one of their families threaten."* (S1),

On the contrary, as claimed by Informant S4:

"*the Cavalieri paid the protection to the mafia not for fear of being killed but because it was a very good deal for them, it was a way to receive exclusive services and benefits; thus it was in this double protection, from the political power, on the one side, and from Cosa Nostra, on the other, were the secret of their economic success must be found*" (S4).

In this regards, Arcidiacono and Avola (in Sciarrone, 2011) in order to shed some light in the so-called grey area, suggest to distinguish between those cases where the entrepreneurs do suffer the extortive pressure exercised by organised crime (subordinated entrepreneur), those cases where the entrepreneurs become an integral part of a criminal group (affiliated/organic entrepreneur) and those cases where the entrepreneur, despite maintains a degree of independence from the group, he/she establishes with it a sort of symbiotic relation (opportunistic entrepreneur)[250]. While in the first case the relationship can be depicted as the one between victim and executioner, in the second case as the one between two similar entities, the third case sees the entrepreneur capable "to reverse his

[250] Similarly, Bezlov and Gounev (in Gounev and Ruggiero, 2012) distinguish between sporadic and symbiotic corrupt relationships between official actors (businessmen or politicians) and criminal groups, where the former involve just a temporary exchange and the latter long-term alliances (Ibid: 34).

condition of victim of extortion managing to his/her own advantage the relations with the criminal group" (Ibid; 239).

Within this last case, one can further distinguish between those entrepreneurs who build just brief and temporary relationships with a criminal group (utilitarian entrepreneur) and those who managed to establish permanent and highly coordinated relations (entrepreneur clients) (Sciarrone, 2009a cited in Arcidiacono and Avola in Sciarrone 2011)[251].

By collocating the Cavalieri in this last category, informant P6 described in details the nature of those exclusive and reciprocal benefits the Cavalieri's cartel and *Cosa Nostra* exchanged for years.

"*The protection provided by Cosa Nostra to that entrepreneurial cartel meant first of all the possibility to get public contract all over Sicily. Then, it meant security, that is not kidnappings, not protection taxes to pay to whatever other clan., no damage to building sites, properties or warehouses. Moreover, there was a sort of social control around their companies so that the trade unions could not oppose the poor and unsafety labour conditions in their building site and workers could not organised any strike; needless to say thanks to all this they made vast extra profits. In exchange, Cosa Nostra with its companies monopolised the equally profitable sub-contract system; this meant first that it shared with them the same economic and speculative interests and secondly that it became a central part of the city economic market"* (P6)

[251] In this regard, however, as argued by Ruggiero (2010), by conceiving organised crime as a 'power system' and therefore focusing not so much on its internal structure and cultural codes but rather on the variety of joint ventures it establish with economic and political actors, one can easily realise that this last form of relationship rather than be a recent development can be dated back to the end of the nineteenth century. In that period the mafia was in fact already described (Franchetti, 1876) as a form of 'political crime' employed by local elite groups to regulate political and economic competitions and to which it was given in exchange some form of relative freedom.

The soft strategy of not frontal attack against the state employed by *Cosa Nostra* in the city can't be explained if it is not taken into account the availability and permeability of the local public institutions, political organisations and economic class to recognise the role it played to protect their shared interests.

Crucially, as again informant P6 argued, the solidity and extension of such 'symbiotic collusion' between politics, economy and organised crime, hindered the development in civil society of any form of organised opposition to the status quo.

"*While in Palermo a civic sensibility had grown around the maxi-trial of the 1980s and in response to the frontal attack against the state led by Cosa Nostra and became to give birth to the first anti-mafia associations, in Catania the electoral blackmail system run by the political class, the inefficiency of the administration, the monopolistic cartel of the Cavalieri, the building speculations, the system of corruption, the collusion with Cosa Nostra have never been questioned by any form of social organised opposition and/or electoral punishment".* (P6)

As it will be discussed in the next chapter, such social apathy will play a crucial role during the course of the crisis in that differently than in other part of the country, in Catania the collapsed of the partitocratic system was not the result of an internal demand for change but rather the consequence of what was occurring elsewhere. This, paraphrasing Bull and Newell (2005), meant, on the one side, that the city began a victim rather than a vehicle of the crisis and, on the other side, that those window of opportunities opened up by the crisis were not fully exploited by the electorate to support the transition from the clientelistic politics of the old regime to a more competitive and programmatic form of democracy.

5.3 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to examine the democratic system operating in the city of Catania until the early 1990s so to support the next two empirical chapter (6 and 7) to identify and explain the causes/anomalies, course and consequences of the fall of the First Republic at the local level. By referring to the national-scale analysis's outcomes, the focus was on those sectors more involved in the crisis, namely politics, economy, society and their correlations during the thirty years between the beginning of the 1960s and the end of the 1980s.

Accordingly, a first set of accounts provided by both informants and those few available sources regarded the notion of 'power block' employed to describe an exclusive net of alliances established between the city political, economic and professional elites and designed to influence in favour of its members the government of the city. Within such power block, moreover, each of its component managed to monopolise and controlled their own field of action favouring each other in a reciprocal pact of solidarity. Thus, while Drago's faction monopolised the city political and electoral market, the Cavalieri conquered its economic one and the local *Cosa Nostra* clan the criminal word.

At the beginning of the 1960s, during the so-called 'economic boom', a new type of political actor substituted the old notables and converted before the Dc and then the other parties into a mass clientelistic organisation. Through both the occupation and strategically expansion of the public sector and the control over the local economy, the new political class maintained and electorally exploit the socio-economic underdevelopment of the city. The covert and unequal distribution of particularistic benefits perpetrated by the Drago's faction not only jeopardise the principle of equality but it also negatively affected the level of horizontal and vertical accountability and responsiveness of the system.

Among the copious number of public authorities occupied and controlled by Drago's pyramid, the consortium for public housing (IACP) was not exploited only for clientelistic

purposes but, more importantly, to set the stage where a steady alliance between the pyramid and the four major entrepreneurial groups operating in the construction industry was established. The so-called economic boom in Catania, in fact, was nothing but a public assisted and unregulated building boom which mortified any alternative industrial development and favoured the most unscrupulous interests at the expense of the urban quality of the city and its territory.

Yet, as many clientelistic systems, Drago's pyramid was both self-enforcing and self-detrimental. Those professional patrons whom career depended on their clientelistic ability had no qualms challenging and striking the peak of the pyramid by using the same weapons they had learned from their leader. This led to a multi-pyramidal organization where several clientelistic clusters in need of resource to distribute gave way to a chaotic dog eat dog warfare which brought the local administrative system to a collapse, encouraged political actors to resort to corruption and overturned the relationship between the local political power and the Cavalieri at the advantage of these latter.

But the Cavalieri's economic success was not attributable only to their proximity with the political power. Whereas Catania was portrayed by the local elites as an oasis where the mafia could not take roots, in reality the mafia had found a 'fertile soil' in the normative uncertainty and vagueness promoted by the political class and transversally recognised by economic and social groups. *Cosa Nostra* in Catania could assume a low profile and employ a strategy of not frontal attack against the city authority because these latter were highly permeable and rather than oppose it they employed it as a military deterrent in defence of restricted and exclusive interests

As it will be discussed in the next chapter, by the end of the 1980s Catania was entering its own era of consequences. Decades of administrative inefficiency, political fragmentation, judicial inactivity, economic deficit and diffuse criminality had brought the

city to the button line of any national raking. The chronic unemployment levels (double than the national one), the social deprivation suffered by vast sections of society, the diffuse deviant and criminal behaviour among young people, the constant waste of public resources in the illicit practices of the city elites and the territorial, social and economic control the mafia exercised were all signs of a general decline.

Those signs though were unheard by the local leaderships unable how they were to solve the degradation brought by their own same actions. At the First Republic crisis eve, then, in Catania it was believed it could be still business as usual; yet, shortly after, the turmoil of the central state and national party system proved the opposite. The echo of those events, in fact, not only were this time heart but they seriously undermined the power block integrity by depriving it of its most precious source of power; namely state transfers.

Chapter 6

The Crisis of the First Republic in Catania

6.0 Introduction

Once examined the democratic system in Catania during the so-called First Republic, this chapter aims to explore what impact the national turmoil of the early 1990s had on its structure and functioning. In this respect, it is necessary to individuate both the causes and the course of the crisis at local level, that is, what triggered the collapse of the local partitocratic regime, what consequences this collapse brought for the city economy, how the electoral body reacted and what requests for change it expressed; and again what actions were taken to correct the many democratic shortcomings the city suffered, which actors took these corrective actions and what level of resistance did they encounter.

Chronologically, the period under scrutiny goes from the beginning of the crisis in 1992 until the resignation of the centre-left mayor[252], Enzo Bianco[253], in 1999. These years, described by many informants as the 'Catania Spring'[254], can be considered as an 'adjustment stage' during which the collapse of the old power block corresponded to an attempt to re-organise local administration more efficiently and to re-impose the rule of law on the corrupt behaviour of the city elites. This historical phase, however, was also characterised by a persistent degree of resistance by some old democratic vices. This partially diluted the wave of change the crisis initially inspired and anticipated the restoration process that took place

[252] As it will be examined in section 6.2, Bianco was the first mayor directly elected by voters rather than by parties (as it was in the old regime) due to the reforms of the local government that followed the collapse of the First Republic.

[253] Bianco, originally a republican (Pri) won the second-ballot against Claudia Fava (La Rete) and was elected mayor leading a coalition of centre-left parties and political movements (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997).

[254] The term 'Catania Spring' in reality was inspired by the so-called 'Palermo Spring' which refers to the period between the maxi-trial against *Cosa Nostra* (1985) and the early 1990s during which in the Capital city a series of cultural, social and political events led to the rise of the first anti-mafia associations in the country (See also Dickie, 2004; 392)

from 1999 onwards when the centre-right coalition conquered the city council and led to what informants described as a new era of political, economic and social decay.

First, for what concerns those anomalies triggering the crisis at local level, informants' accounts supported the national-scale explanatory model[255]. Although the crisis cannot be explained by a mono-causal model, what mainly destabilised the local political system was the fall of the central party system along with the restrictions on public resources imposed by the central State. Given that the electoral integrity of the local parties relied on those state funds provided by the central partitocracy, once this began to cut public spending and more significantly to collapse, the local mass clientelistic parties could not but enter into crisis. This, ultimately, gave the possibility for a small group of young local prosecutors to begin a series of anti-corruption and anti-mafia investigations which, however, were not able to fully re-establish the rule of law and hinder the re-emergency of those pacts between the political, economic and criminal power that had characterised the old regime in the city.

Second, in regard to the so-called 'Catania Spring' the first factor pointed out by informants concerned the effects of the reforms of the local government of the early 1990s in the city. As discussed in chapter 1, as part of the institutional response to the failings of the old political regime, these reforms attempted to enact the transition from the consensual model of the First Republic to a more competitive one in the hope that the focus would shift from politics to policies (Trigilia, 2005). The aim was to increase, at local level, government stability by reducing the fragmentation caused by the proportional voting system and party-oriented logic of the partitocratic era (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997), and with that to increase the level of accountability and responsiveness. Accordingly the reforms opted for the direct

[255] This was formed by both the structural weaknesses of the partitocratic system, to which it followed the judicial anti-corruption campaign and conjunctural events such as the collapse of ideological divisions and the beginning of European integration and global economic re-organisation.

election of city mayors to whom greater political power was given over councils and the parties governing them, and who could rely on a more stable and majoritarian government.

Yet, in Catania, whereas with the weakening of the old parties, the local elections in 1993 were characterised by a low turnout (Enzo Bianco was elected by just 29% of the electorate), in both the provincial and national elections in 1993 and 1994, an exceptionally high rate of participation accompanied the overwhelming victory of Berlusconi's coalition in the city; a coalition where, as some informant stressed, the electorate found again the old clientelistic appeal as most of the second lines of the old local political parties found there a new platform (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997)[256].

6.1 The crisis in Catania: an explanatory model

6.1.1 The roots of the crisis

A first set of accounts provided by informants in regards to the causes that triggered the crisis in the Sicilian city recalled those 'warning signs' (Ginsborg, 2001) and 'roots of the crisis' (Bull and Newell, 2005) discussed in chapter 3. This referred to those endogenous elements of saturation and degeneration of the political system exacerbated during the 1980s which, if corrected in time, could had given the system more scope to adjustment. This point was addressed by informant A1 in the following terms:

"*the main reason behind the crisis both at local and national level was that the political parties had become systematically corrupted and therefore poorly representative, they transformed themselves into a sort of caste. Consequently, before or later that system was going to collapse due to the widespread illicit practices of its political class and its detachment from the rest of the country*" (A1).

[256] The two authors claimed that the election of Bianco, the first centre-left candidate in 45 years, was an isolated case not only for the weak electoral support the mayor received but also because, notwithstanding the crisis of the old parties and the reform of the local government, the local Dc, differently than the local Psi, Pli and Pri that had disappeared, was still the first party in the council with 22 seats (Ibid; 46).

Similar descriptions were given by informant J1 who claimed that:

"*to fully understand the crisis of the early 1990s in Catania it is absolutely necessary to recall the crisis within the city political and institutional system that developed during the 1980s. The so-called 'moral question'*[257] *raised by the Pci secretary Berlinguer at the beginning of the 1980s was largely unmet by the local political class which, apart from the system of corruption, was also mainly in collusion with organised crime. Yet, corruption and collusion became widespread because the parties had previously lost their function and became electoral apparatus. Long before the collapse of the system, the parties had ceased to guide the economic and social process and became self-referential* (J1).

In an additional comment informant M1 stressed that this self-referential attitude of the political elite was also encouraged by a large sense of impunity as until the beginning of *Clean Hands* anti-corruption campaign almost everyone had remained unpunished:

"*Once I spoke with one of the most prominent political leaders in Catania and I asked him: 'Why did you all fall? To be put on trial and convicted you must have had some responsibility, mustn't you?' And he replied by saying: 'We fell because we were certain of our impunity, we were certain we could do whatever we wanted to and for as long we wished'. This hindered the possibility to correct the system*" (M1).

Ultimately, this inability was also stressed by informant M9 who claimed that:

"*The city political system was unable to renew itself. While in those years in fact some parties, for electoral purposes, proposed some more positive political figures these latter*

[257] In an interview to the daily newspaper *La Republica,* Berlinguer stressed the need of the so-called moral question against the overwhelming power acquired by the political parties over state, economy and society and their clientelistic and corrupt system (*La Repubblica* 28th July 1981 – Eugenio Scalfari I partiti? *Solo potere e clientele*)

were soon dismissed after a few months in power by members of those same parties; any attempts to reform the system was immediately neutralised by its same own vices". (M9)

This last point is confirmed by the failed attempt in 1988 to improve the reputation of the local administration with the election of an outsider as city mayor. Enzo Bianco, the same mayor who was then directly elected by the new system in 1993 and led the 'Catania spring', in fact had been previously appointed city mayor thanks to the weakening of the local Dc monopoly[258]. As informant P5 claimed, this fact *per se* seemed a revolution:

"*for 40 years in Catania all the mayors not only had been Christian Democrats but mostly from one specific faction directly or indirectly led by Drago. That a 37 year old young man like Bianco was elected by a coalition that also included oppositional parties such as the Pci was per se a historical event but also a sign of change, of a crisis within the system which started to reveal its intrinsic weaknesses*" (P5).

However, although despite Bianco election could potentially have been a window of opportunity, a few months later he was dismissed by the same who had appointed him, closing again that window.

As discussed in chapter 5, by the beginning of the 1980s, the political fragmentation caused by the fall of Drago's pyramid had further degenerated into perpetual governmental instability increasing the city's economic stagnation and its many social emergencies. Between 1980 and 1993, 15 mayors[259] were elected and soon after dismissed by uninterrupted brokering between the many parties and factions for the control over authorities and

[258] During the 1980s, in line with the rest of the country, also in Catania the Christian Democrats lost electoral support (from the 42% of 1980 to the 32.9% of 1988) in favour of the local Psi and other minor parties (the Psi passed from the 9% in the 1980 election to the 15.6% in 1988) (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997; 52-table 2)

[259] As reported by Lanza and Timpanaro (1997), in the thirteen years between 1980 and 1993 the overage time of each mayor was 270 days with the longest lasting 640 days (Coco-Dc) and the shortest only 60 days (Ibid; page 54 Table 3). Besides, during these years for three time (1988-1992-1993) the council was governed by an extraordinary commissioner sent by the central state either due to corruption scandals or to budgetary crises.

resources. As informants P1 remembered, this perpetual warfare for the distribution of public resources was perfectly symbolised by a question asked in Sicilian dialect by a member of the local government during the election of one of the mayors: *chi c'e' pi mia?* Literally, 'What's in it for me? Accordingly,

"*public spending was scientifically divided into quotas between each member of the council, each one had his/her fair share and each one explicitly or implicitly asked 'chi c'e' pi mia?*" (P1).

A striking example of the increasing discrepancy between who governs and what is governed is perhaps the negationist attitude of the local elites in regard to the alarming exponential growth of the mafia criminal and economic power. In January 1990, in fact, the city's entire institutional elite gathered together for a two day conference hosted by Catania University and emblematically entitled: "Catania, not just Mafia". Throughout the many speeches made it is possible to find not only the downplaying mentioned above but also a general inclination to blame, for the troubles suffered by the city, the central government in Rome (which, according to most guesses, favoured only the economic development of the northern regions[260]) and the national press for portraying Catania as a frontier city. The mafia, many guests stressed, was in reality exploited as an excuse to defame the city political and economic classes and to further the career of the so-called 'anti-mafia professionals'[261].

Yet, as some informants significantly stressed, the discrepancy between the local elites and the actual disorder in which the city lay was not challenged by any organised form

[260] The city mayor at that time, Guido Ziccone, despite twenty-seven out of sixty councillors were under investigation and eight members of his government were waiting to be put on trial, expressed the hope that the conference would at least redress the unfairness in blaming local elites for the city's decline when those responsible were to be found elsewhere, (Fava, 1991).

[261] This term was coined by the novelist Leonardo Sciascia in conflict with some anti-mafia prosecutors (*I Professionisti dell-Anti-mafia Il Corriere della Sera* 10th of January 1987).

of civic dissatisfaction and opposition to the *status quo*[262]. In this respect informants A2 and A3 argued that:

"*any form of socially organised protest in Catania has always been extremely weak. Not only the so-called sub-proletariat classes but also the lower middle and middle classes tend to adopt individualistic and self-interested behaviour and are therefore easily subject to clientelistic appeals*" (A2).

"*Whereas a clientelistic system is more appealing among the most fragile social groups, in Catania the responsibility and the role played by many members of the middles class in accepting and taking advantage of, rather than protesting against, such a system has necessarily to be taken into account* " (A3).

Accordingly, many of those who electorally supported the local Dc and were highly involved in its clientelistic system, despite perhaps disliked the critical decline of the city or the corrupt practices of those they had elected, were still keen to accept and tolerate them as they would still obtain benefits. Ultimately, as will emerge in the next section, in the same way as the fall of Drago's pyramid in the 1970s, the only source of threat to a self-reinforcing system is one that comes from outside[263].

6.1.2 The a-ideological fall of the system in Catania

In regard of the impact of the crisis of the early 1990s in Catania, a first and crucial aspect provided by informants' accounts is that the city didn't represent one of those 'vantage

[262] As claimed by Pizzorno (1964 cited in Golden, 2010), decades of particularistic distribution of benefits discourage the development of 'collective and class identity' by exercising an individual mobilisation of the electorate.

[263] Accordingly, Golden (2010) argues that "the collapse of the dominant party's political position can only be orchestrated through some kind of exogenous change, not because of dissatisfaction stemming from below" (Ibid; 24).

points'[264] (Ginsborg, 2001) from which the multi-faceted nature of the crisis could be observed. In contrast to Milan, Rome, or Palermo, Catania seems to have had a secondary position in the development of the major events of those years, as if it was inevitably but passively involved in them. Thus, informant P6 stressed that:

"*the city was a peripheral part of a bigger system that entered into crisis. When the collateral framework faded away at national level the local system, which had already reached the point of exhaustion and had survived thanks to that framework, collapsed in turn and lost its traditional impunity as a consequence*"(P6).

By paraphrasing the distinction suggested by Bull and Newell (2005) between the vehicles and the victims of the crisis, it could be claimed, therefore, that the Sicilian city, rather than representing one of those major scenarios in which the crisis developed, suffered the consequences of events occurring elsewhere.

In this last regards, according to informants, the major event that destabilised the mass clientelistic parties and their corrupt relationships with the protected entrepreneurial class was not so much the end of the ideological divide but rather the reduction of public resources in favour of southern Italian regions due to the budgetary adjustments requested by Maastricht. Besides, as some informants claimed, those external financial pressures undermined a system that was already economically weakened and on the edge of an internal crisis. The 'scientific division into quota' of each public office and resource available and the constant electoral need to dispose of extra resources had led the city during the 1980s to a permanent budgetary impasse[265].

[264] See chapter 3 – Section 3.1

[265] In this respect, Nicolosi (1989) reported that in those years several prefects in Catania along with the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission had denounced to the Minister of the Interior the widespread corruption and permanent administrative chaos in the Sicilian city, highlighting the social and economic consequences (Ibid; 421).

In this respect, the crisis of the system was described by informant A2, J1, M2 and E6 as an inevitable outcome, inscribed in its DNA, something that sooner or later had to happen:

"*Catania had a decaying political and economic system, a system that had reached a point of no return in the misuse of public resources invested to fuel the process of gaining consensus and corrupt practices. The system ran out of money long before the crisis of the early 1990s, but despite this everyone carried on the same game by creating an enormous public deficit"* (A2).

"*The abuse of institutional and economic resources for the fulfilment of this or that party's financial interests, or of this or that faction, absorbed all administrative activity and led the local council to economic collapse"* (J1).

"*Apart from the economic crisis of the early 1990s, considering how corrupt the political and economic system was in this city, it is plausible to assume that sooner or later it would have imploded anyway* " (M2).

"*The system would have deteriorated in any case, perhaps it would have lasted another 5-10 years; both the economic crisis and judicial action have only accelerated a decline that already existed*" (E6).

In line with this accounts, informant P6 claimed that the end of the so-called communist threat, considered by scholars the other main exogenous cause of the crisis, at local level played even a smaller role than it did at the national one[266].

"*The fall of the Berlin Wall acted as a national pre-condition for a series of events to occur at local level. In Catania it was not so much the end of the ideological divide per se that*

[266] As claimed in chapter 3, the ideological division in Italy, which excluded the Pci, the second largest party, from government, by the end of the 1970s had been reduced to an illusory conflict (Revelli, 1996), an alibi (Ginsborg, 2001) behind which under-the-table negotiations between all the parties regularly took place.

destabilised the political system; in fact this being clientelistic in nature was essentially a-ideological. It was rather the effect those events had on the national system that weakened also the local Dc regime and gave more room for other political forces" (P6).

Similarly ,informant A3 argued that the long-lasting electoral success of the local Dc had little to do with ideological factors and/or the fear of the imminent coming of a communist regime:

"*the ideological divide in Catania was ephemeral as political support was gained by controlling and distributing resources rather than by the use of ideological appeals. In accessing resources the Dc was helped by the strength of the party at national level. In contrast, the Pci, along with the other oppositional parties, had weak support because it had limited access to those resources rather than because it was perceived as a potential threat*" (A3).

Looking at the local electoral data, since the end of the 1950s the local Pci never achieved a higher result than one third of the political support the Dc had. This trend further increased from the end of the 1970s onwards when the Communist Party's electoral support shrank to one fourth of the Christian Democrat's. Besides, as addressed by informant M2, the local Communists soon participated to the partition between parties and factions and took the side of the city dominant classes[267].

"*The Pci rather than oppose the system it adjusted to it. The local Communist leaders were those, for instance, who denied the collusion between the Cavalieri and the local mafia claiming that any accusation of this sort could only threaten local employment. The party*

[267] This point is also supported by Fava (2009) who also argue that the regional and local Pci supported a distorted model of modernization in that it tolerated both corruption and collusion with organised crime as a cost to be paid if the local economy had to develop and occupation had to be created (Ibid; 13)

passively observed the waste of public money and in the end aspired to take part in it and become one of the Cavalieri's political representatives along with the Dc and the other small parties. Not by chance was the party's headquarters in the city placed in one of Costanzo's flats for free, I mean the party didn't even pay rent".

Yet, a final but significant point was suggested by informant A4 who claimed that the weakness of the anti-communist ideology in Catania was counterbalanced by an alternative political ideology unanimously supported by all the local parties which strongly recalls the underlying motto of the conference 'Catania; not just Mafia' discussed above.

"*The real ideological appeal, which unanimously unified the entire party system in the city, didn't really concern the communist vs anti-communist division but rather the so-called southern question. There was an ideological rhetoric which conveniently and vaguely referred to the economic damage suffered by the South since the Unification of the country and therefore demanded those financial resources needed to repair that damage. This was the glue which held the different political forces together, the request for public resources through an opportunistic use of the southern question*" (A4).

With little doubt, this unprincipled ideological appeal was not so much undermined by the end of the communist threat as by the reduction of these resources on which the authority of the local political system lay. Accordingly, both informant S2 and E2 described the crisis in the city in the following terms:

"*here the crisis of the First Republic was of an economic nature; this affected the local political system based as it was on the distribution of resources, revealed the costs that system had for the public and, furtherly deteriorated the fragile economy of the city dependent as it was on that resources*"(S2).

"*The economic pressure on the central state put a strain on the local economy as it affected the public contract system on which the latter strictly depended. The construction sector*[268]*, the core of the city's economy, came to a halt with dramatic consequences for employment which in turn further undermined political authority*" (E2).

As during Drago's era, the integrity of both the city's mass clientelistic parties could not but be threatened by the financial crisis of the central state. Yet, whereas in the 1970s the local crisis could be contained thanks to the integrity of the national party framework, by the early 1990s the fall of the latter could only be followed by the end of the Dc regime and with that of the power block that had governed the city for forty years. As the next section will show, by weakening the political and economic interests behind the block, the crisis of these years provided even in Catania an opportunity for some local judicial investigations to mirror the *Clean Hand* campaign in Milan.

6.1.3 The local Tangetopoli

The first element that emerged from informants' accounts in regard to the so-called *Clean Hands* anti-corruption campaign in Catania and its role in the crisis evokes the distinction, suggested by Ginsborg (2001; 250-251), between structure and agency. Accordingly, whereas these investigations were often described as a clash between judicial and political institutions, in reality the fight against corruption of the political class in Milan as well as that against the Mafia in Palermo during the 1980s, were rather undertaken by a minority of judicial personnel who rejected the system of collusion with political power that

[268] According to the local ANCE (the Building Contractor National Association) between 1992 and 1998 the construction industry in Catania lost the 11.4 per cent of public investments. This regarded both the public work sector (-32.3%) and the private housing and it had severe consequences on the manufacturing sector orbiting the construction industry (ANCE, Catania-Report 2012).

had often characterised the actions of their older and more conservative colleagues (Sasson, 2008)[269]. In this respect informant M5 claimed that:

"*the few judicial investigations against the system of political corruption and collusion with the Mafia in Catania were the result of a generational change in the local judicial system. The arrival of young prosecutors in fact broke the traditional collusion that the system had built for many decades with both the political, economic and criminal powers in the city*" (M5).

Accordingly, informant P6 argued that in the city

"*until the crisis of the system, the impunity of these networks of alliances behind the power block as well as the mantra according to which the Mafia didn't exist, was contended and guaranteed by a judicial system which was tough with the weak and weak with the strong and which was therefore an integr/al part of the block*" (P6).

During the 1980s in fact, while the Palace of Justice in Palermo became the heart of the anti-mafia fight, the one in Catania was at the centre of a sensational judicial scandal; the so-called *Caso Catania* (Catania case). The scandal erupted when Giuseppe D'Urso, a professor of city planning at Catania University, sent the CSM (the Italian Magistrates' Internal Board of Supervisors) a detailed dossier he had previously written regarding the key role played by the judicial system in maintaining the impunity of those actors involved in the so-called 'sack of Catania'[270]. In response the Internal Board started by the end of 1984 a series of investigations into the city's Public Prosecutors Office which led to the arrest of

[269] On the corruption of the judicial system in Italy, discussed in Chapter 3 – Section 3.1.2, see also Guarnieri (1997), Della Porta and Vannucci 1999), Ginsborg (2001) and Bull and Newell (2005).
[270] Besides, these accusation were also reiterated both by the testimony of a former member of a local Mafia clan (Ardita, 2009) and the denunciation of the Juvenile Hall Director, Gain Battista Scida'.

several institutional representatives[271] including the Deputy Prosecutor, Giulio Cesare Di Natale, his assistant, Aldo Grassi, the President of the Assize Court, Pietro Perracchio and the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal, Aldo Vitale. As it was revealed by these investigations, the prosecutors had extensively concealed the illicit conduct of public administrators, politicians, members of local mafia clans and the famous Cavalieri del Lavoro by filing investigations, manipulating criminal records, intimidating witnesses and burying evidence (Fava, 1991). Besides, according to Informant M2, these events gave a real image of those net of alliances between the city elites discussed in Chapter 5:

"*the so-called Catania case demonstrated that the Palace of Justice was at the service of the Cavalieri and Santapaola. One of the paradoxes revealed in those years gives you an idea of how all the different elites in the city were connected. It was discovered that one of the Cavalieri under investigation for collusion with the Mafia had nonetheless won the contract to build the new Town Court which in turn was the result of an illegal variation to the urban plan*" (M2).

Yet, whereas the generational turnover in the local judicial class represented a turning point in the way judicial power was exercised in the city, at the same time, as suggested by informant J3, those young prosecutors were not only inspired but more importantly favoured by the *Clean Hand* campaign in Milan.

"*The Milan pool not only encouraged some prosecutors here in Catania to investigate but also targeting the national party system indirectly weakened the local one thus giving more scope for those local young prosecutors*" (J3).

[271] As reported by Nicolosi (1989; 315-316) among the three hundred arrest warrants ordered by the Public Prosecutor of Turin, one could find side by side with members of the local Mafia, public administrators, judges, magistrates, police officers and prison guards.

Moreover, another key factor informants have identified is in line with the explanatory model built in chapter 3; whereas some authors (Burgess and Bufacchi, 1998; McCarthy, 1995; Ginsborg, 2001; Bull and Newell, 2005) see the end of the communist threat as providing the opportunity for the prosecutors to finally investigate without risk of favouring the Pci, it is at the increasing unaffordability, and therefore inconvenience[272], of corrupt exchanges that one has to look to understand the success of the local investigations. Once the availability of public resources, the *condition sine qua non* for the political class to finance the consensus machine and for the entrepreneurial class to operate in the local protected market, were reduced all those self-supporting networks went partially into crisis providing an opportunity for those few prosecutors to investigate As informant S4 suggested:

"*probably what happened in Catania was that the price of corruption in the form of bribes started to be considered unbearable by those many entrepreneurs who had until that moment benefited from the payment*"[273] (S4).

This was also echoed by informant J1 and A2 who claimed that:

"*Clean Hands exploded in Catania because those who for many years had accepted the system of corruption run by the entire local party spectrum suddenly found that system inconvenient due to the reduction of available resources*" (J1).

"*Basically the system of corruption had reached a tipping point because the constant withdrawals the political system made from the entrepreneurial one eroded the economic integrity of the latter. Besides, the political protection those entrepreneurs had received and*

[272] On this point see also Nelken, (1996); Guarnieri (1997); Golden (2010)

[273] This point is also confirmed by Ardita (2009), one of those young prosecutors who led the local investigations, who claims that differently than in the past, when for an entrepreneur to collaborate with the judicial system meant the end of his/her economic activity, by the early 1990s the conspiracy of silence linking political, economic and criminal actors had collapsed and everyone tried to save whatever could be saved by providing collaboration to the prosecutors (Ibid; 103).

their dependence on public resources made them extremely weak when the economic crisis reduced those resources. The system was not feasible anymore because it ran out of money" (A2).

These accounts are confirmed by those few trials held in the city that involved its key political and entrepreneurial figures. The first and most scandalous of them concerned the maxi bribe behind the construction of an exhibition centre in a former industrial district abandoned since the 1920s[274]. The investigations began on the basis of the testimony given by the Cavaliere Francesco Finocchiaro in May 1993 who confessed to having paid political leaders many times in order to obtain the contract. Yet, as informant M5 pointed out, Finocchiaro tried to be smart in that:

"*by accusing the political class of extortion he wished to emerge as the victim of a political imposition, rather than the accomplice of the corrupt system he had copiously benefited from for decades"* (M5).

Accordingly, the trial proved the entrepreneur was an active and key participant in these illicit practices having "an extraordinary capacity to pollute the political and bureaucratic structure of the city and to put in place a double layer of corruption, from above [with the political system] and below [with other companies], that allowed him to keep out other competitors" (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, 2000; 47).
Moreover, as emerged from this and the other investigations of those years, behind each of the many tenders run by the local authorities during the 1980s, the political class had

[274] The bribe proportionally paid to all political parties amounted to 6.8 billion Liras (around £3.2 million) (*La Repubblica* 06/01/1998). As some informants claimed, this corruption scandal was considered the local version of 'The Mother of all the bribes' nicknamed given to the trial on the Enimont case (see Ginsborg 2001; 279-280).

organised a system of proportional distribution[275] between the political parties of those illegal resources extracted from the entrepreneurs. The latter, in exchange, had formed a cartel that dictated to the public authorities the list of public works to put out to tender and had arranged a turnover between each other to gain the contracts (Ardita, 2009).

At the same time though, by investigating the corruption of the local leadership, prosecutors ended up investigating criminal actors within the mafia clans and in that revealing the active role *Cosa Nostra* had played in the distribution of contracts through the system of subcontracts[276]. It was therefore possible to launch a series of anti-mafia operations which led to the arrest of the local *Cosa Nostra* boss, Nitto Santapaola[277], along with hundreds of affiliates.

Inevitably, though, this systemic corruption, apart from lowering the quality of democracy in the city, had a direct effect on its socio-economic status. As claimed by the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission (2000), during the 1980s in the Sicilian city, investment in public contracts dictated by the main economic actors and indulged by the political class "absorbed almost the total public budget in the province while the city, in those years, reached a social decline never before witnessed" (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, 2000; 55)[278].

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[275] As reported by the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission Report (2000), to this proportional partitions of bribes between the different political forces participated also the local Pci through its system of companies, the so-called *Cooperative* (Ibid; 52).

[276] During one of the judicial proceedings of those years it emerged in fact that Finocchiaro not only had paid a copious amount of bribes in favour of the political and bureaucratic class but it had reached some agreements with local mafia clans to select which companies would have obtained the subcontracts (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, report 2000; 48).

[277] Benedetto Santapaola was arrested the 18th of May 1993 after 11 years on the run. After a few years, he received a series of life sentences for mandate of the killing of Giuseppe Fava, Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino.

[278] Besides, at regional level,, as reported by Ardita (2009), in those years in order to feed the system of corruption, 10% of the total regional budget of 20 thousands billions Liras (around 800 million pounds) was destined to finance public works and that around 2.5% of that 10% was the amount the parties collected every year in the form of bribes (around 10 million pounds) (Ibid; 54). See also *La Repubblica – Tangetopoli a Catania; Diciannove in manette* (11/11/1992).

According to informant E3 in fact, the system of corruption had a detrimental impact, for instance, on the urban quality of the city and local economy because:

"*in order to pay a bribe companies used to either postpone the end of the work, through the use of variations on the original project so to receive extra resources and make extra profits, or use cheap materials which means first, that these public buildings will fall down in 10 years, and second, that people's safety is put at risk. Because of the wastage of all these resources in Sicily and in this city we have an enormous lack of infrastructure*" (E3).

Besides, informant A2 described such system as a sort of natural selector in that:

"*quite often these systems eliminated the most wealth, dynamic, competitive and capable entrepreneurs because it was easier and more lucrative to conform to those illicit methods. Thus virtuous businessmen had to participate, were corrupted and therefore became subject to control if they wanted to survive*" (A2).

Ultimately, both leverage over the political class acquired by the Cavalieri and the mere economic interests of the public administrators in running public contracts meant as informant E3 claimed that:

"*in this city everything was done not according to a rational plan but according to whether or not there was some profit to make*[279]*; the result was that most of those public works were completely useless to the community, yet the point was to invest public money where it was easier and more convenient to ask for bribes*" (E3).

[279] This point was also claimed by the local journalist Giuseppe Fava at the beginning of the 1980s in the following terms: "In this city whatever public work has been carried on was exclusively towards profit…there is not in Italy any other city similarly built by private interests, that is exclusively built by individuals according to their personal interest, profit, commodity and fantasy" (Giiuseppe Fava, *I Siciliani* 1982).

Yet, while many informants had a positive view of the judicial action of the early 1990s as it partially undermined a political, economic and criminal system that had directly contributed to the socio-economic decline of the city, at the same time other informants expressed more critical opinions on the effectiveness of judicial actions.
Therefore, a positive views was provided by informant P6 who described the *Clean Hands* investigations as

"*a revolution from Milan that shocked the old transversal alliances even in Catania thereby providing an opportunity for a real change*" (P6).

Similarly informant J1 claimed that:

"*the prosecutors by revealing the system of corruption and collusion with the mafia brought about a cultural transformation in the city that also pervaded its political and judicial institutions after years of concealment and stagnation*" (J1).

Finally, informant S2 recalled these events in the following terms:

"*these investigations gave the mortal blow to the old system and favoured the beginning of a different administrative season; the Catania Spring*" (S2).

In contrast, less optimistic views were provided by some informants who claimed that although trails were held, nonetheless they involved only certain more prominent political and economic figures leaving the less well known but no less compromised ones untouched. Informant S4 addressed this point by claiming that:

"*as a matter of fact in Catania, apart from the most famous investigations, the trials never started and the majority of the elite class was not investigated*" (S4).

Moreover, informant M5 argued that:

"*of the few trials held in Catania most ended either with the statute of modification or with the death and/or acquittal of the defendants; both the second and third level of judgment took too long to be completed despite the initial effort of those young prosecutors, so their work was cancelled out later on*[280]" (M5).

A final but significant point was made by informant J3 who claimed that:

"*in those years we had just a few corruption trials because a trial of this kind is based on evidences; whereas in Milan the number of those who started to collaborate with justice, the so-called pentiti, was enormous, in Catania, except for a very few cases, this phenomenon had a marginal impact*" (J3).

Ultimately, apart from some baseless conspiracy theories proposed by some informants according to which the action of the local prosecutors was guided either by "*foreign financial interests*" (E2) or by "*northern economic interests*" (P4), informant P2's view seems to belong to that process of 'politicization of anti-corruption' proposed by Sberna and Vannucci, (2013) and discussed in Chapter 3. This is the attempt to restore the reputation of the political class by questioning the impartiality of judicial action and limiting it by ad hoc legislation. Accordingly

"*all these investigation were the result of a sort of judicial hysteria that created a climate of suspicion. I remember I was even afraid to say to people that I was a politician as they would have automatically considered me a thief. The implicit intension of the prosecutors was to strike everyone in any case*" (P2).

[280] As reported by the daily newspaper *La Repubblica* (*Tangetopoli Catanese; prescrizione in aguato – La Repubblica* 06/01/1998) most of the defendants in the trial held in regards to maxi-bribe for the construction of an exhibition centre were acquittal due to the expiry of the period of limitation.

To argue that "the baby was thrown out with the bath water" corroborates the idea that in reality the prosecutors perused the politicians rather than the widespread corruption which, for decades they had allowed to continue, or prosecuted the Cavalieri rather than their symbiotic and long-lasting collusion with mafia.

On the contrary, though, considering the overall impunity of those few political and economic actors involved in the *Tangetopoli* of Catania and the economic and social costs the system of corruption had in the city, such line of explanation sounds little convincing.
A more plausible account is that both the crisis of the party system at national level and the contraction in public spending made the local power block more vulnerable to the action of a small group of prosecutors who partially re-established the rule of law in the city.
Besides, as the next section will explore, the fall of the old regime also provided with the opportunity to begin a new and more programmatic administrative season that seemed to be a possible 'turning point' from the four long decades of Dc regime.

6.2 The Catania Spring: changes and continuities

Once the explanatory model developed for the national scale analysis has been tested at local level, the next step is to examine the 'course' of the crisis that is the set of institutional reactions put in motion by it distinguishing those aimed at changing and improving the local administrative and economic system from those that resisted this change. In this respect, from informants' accounts it appeared that whereas the collapsed of the old regime and the reforms of the local governments provided with the opportunity to improve the efficiency of the local administration, at the same time many of its detrimental traits such as clientelism, corruption and collusion with organised crime soon began to re-emerge affecting again the overall quality of democracy in the city.

In terms of discontinuity with the past, a first major element of novelty, discussed with informants, dealt with the reforms of the local governments enacted in those years in

response to the referendum campaigns. As discussed in chapter 1, in those years, the reform regarding the central government was limited to a re-organisation of the electoral system and therefore it resulted insufficient to guarantee a successful transition from a consensual to a competitive model. On the contrary, the reforms dealing with the local governments, apart from introducing a more majoritarian electoral system, it profoundly modified the institutional relationship between the executive (the cities mayors) and the councils (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997). The aim of the reform was in fact to guarantee the stability, responsiveness and accountability of the local government by allowing voters to directly elect their mayors[281] and by increasing the power hold by these latter. Accordingly, it was believed that a stronger executive power, by bypassing the particularistic interests of political parties, could facilitate the policy-making process, make it more visible and therefore accountable and respond more effectively to the needs of the communities (Trigilia, 2005).

By transferring local political power from the parties' apparatus to these new directly elected mayors, the reforms also led to a process of personalisation of executive power (Lanza in Lanza et al, 2004) in that the mayors as individuals, rather than the parties, were now politically accountable and responsible for administrative performance. Besides, in line with the anti-partitocratic mood of those years[282], many of those elected mayors were chosen as candidates not on the basis of their political affiliation but rather for their managerial expertise and personal charisma. Similarly, in turn, the new mayors selected their councillors not because of their role within the parties' apparatus but rather for their administrative skills and professional profile. In other words, it seemed as if the focus had suddenly switched from

[281] During the First republic, in fact, mayors were elected through post-electoral bargaining between parties and their role was reduced to one of rectifier of what was decided within the parties apparatus. By contrast, under the new arrangements not only the mayors were directly elected by the people but they also acquired the power to nominate their own councillors instead of the parties and count on a greater majority in the cities' councils.
[282] As discussed in Chapter 3 – Section 3.2, following the *Tangetopoli* corruption scandal, both media and civic society attempted to solve the crisis with a conflict against the political class assumed as the only source of the country's troubles.

politics, parties' interests and power distribution, to policies and administrative efficiency (Trigilia, 2005).

Yet, although the reforms were able to guarantee the stability of local administration, in order to govern the new mayors had to deal with a labyrinthine bureaucratic system that unlike the political system had remained unchanged throughout the crisis[283]. Moreover, whereas during the first direct elections of the mayors in 1993 the party system was too weak to exercise any pressures or veto power on the new administrations, by the second round of voting in 1997 the new parties regained leverage over the mayors and the composition of their governments (Lanza in Lanza et al 2004; Trigilia, 2005)[284]. This, as will be examined in respect of Catania, brought a return of many shortcomings of the old regime which diluted the encouraging achievements brought about by the reforms[285].

6.2.1 A quite "wintery" spring

It was within these new rules that Enzo Bianco was directly elected mayor of Catania in June 1993 starting what some informants and some sources described as a more virtuous administrative season that within the city is often nicknamed 'the Catania Spring'. Yet, notwithstanding this positive outlook, it is necessary to examine more closely the effectiveness of the new administration and the political, economic and social context in which it operated. In political terms, as stressed by informant M2, the new electoral rules did appeared as a possible change of course from the past.

[283] Such degree of resistance to changes was due to the control, untouched by the anti-corruption investigations, the old parties had exercised over the city bureaucratic sector for decades (Lanza and Timpanaro,1997; 45).
[284] As claimed by Trigilia (2005), in many cities around the country after a first period when the mayors enjoyed a great autonomy, the 'return of the parties' reduced the presence of professional figures and re-introduced the one of parties' members in the composition of local governments.
[285] As it will be discussed later in this chapter, in Catania, perhaps due to the weak anti-corruption campaign of the early 1990s, the new political parties were soon overcrowded by and organised around old political figures who resisted the fall of the old regime and re-established their old clientelistic networks.

"*The elections in 1993, the first after the fall of the old power system in the city, made possible what until then was impossible; that is freeing voters from the clientelistic system of the old patrons and finally proposing some policies*" (M2)

However, despite the election of a centre-left candidate like Bianco seemed to represent a sort of revolution in a city that had been governed for almost 40 years by the most conservative factions of the Dc, looking at the electoral data, such degree of change appears reduced. In this respect, a key factor to stress is that the new electoral rules in Sicily[286] included two separate votes, one for the mayor and one for the members of the city council. Contrary to the aim of the reforms to increase the level of responsiveness by increasing local government stability, this mixed system created a scenario where the coalition of the elected mayor did not always have a majority in the city council so limiting his/her administrative actions (Lanza, in Lanza et al, 2004).

In Catania, in fact, while Bianco obtained 40.4% of the votes in the first round and 52.1% in the second round[287], his coalition obtained only 17 seats in the council against the 22 gained by the Dc. Besides, a further element of continuity with the past, suggested by Lanza and Motta (1993), regards the difference in electoral turnout between the first and second round. Whereas, in fact, the former saw the participation of the 72.6% of the electorate, since there were many candidates from centre-right political orientations[288], for the

[286] This crucial peculiarity, however, regarded only the region of Sicily as in 1992 the regional government, anticipating the central one, had passed its own reform of the local governments (Regional Law 7/1992). organised in fact around two separate votes. This discrepancy was, however, subsequently corrected in 1997 reducing the vote to one as in the rest of the country (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997; Lanza 2002).

[287] Bianco, who was supported by a centre-left coalition (see Lanza in Lanza et al , 2004; 64), competed in the second ballot against Claudio Fava who belong to *La Rete*, the anti-mafia party founded in Palermo in the mid-1980s and who obtained the 27.5% in the first round and the 47.9% in the second one.

[288] Apart from Bianco and Fava, in the first round two major centre-right candidates were Enzo Trantino (17.3%), an old leader of the local Msi, and Antonio Scavone, (12.3%) a Christian Democrats. Moreover, whereas Scavone obtained 22.439 votes, his coalition mainly formed by the Dc obtained 49.138 votes (Lanza and Motta, 1993; 759)

second round only the 58.1% of the electorate voted and only the 29% elected Bianco as city mayor.

Ultimately, the low turnout in the mayor elections was counterbalanced by a large turnout in both the election in 1993 of a right-wing candidate, Sebastiano Musumeci, as President of the province and the election of the national government in 1994 in which Berlusconi's coalition was able to conquer most of the electoral constituencies in the city and in its province (Lanza in Lanza et al, 2004)[289].

These double-edge electoral results were explained by informant P6 as a blend of new and old electoral attitude:

"*even if part of the electorate was finally able to express its opinions by voting for new political figures, the majority, used to clientelistic appeal, either voted for the old Dc or didn't vote due to the weakening of the old clientelistic market*" (P6).

This point was also addressed by informant A2 in the following terms:

"*the reduction of public resources caused the temporary interruption of certain electoral dynamics which, however, re-merged in the national election in 1994 with the overwhelming victory of the centre-right coalition*" (A2)

However, although the new mayor of Catania could count neither on a favourable majority in the council nor on a cooperative bureaucratic system and had inherited from the old administrations a city with vast economic and social difficulties, he nonetheless managed to maintain government stability for five years in a council where a mayor used to last no

[289] As the author claims, in fact, Berlusconi's party Fi was able to attract the most conservative sectors of the local electoral body and in particular those who had until there supported the local Dc and Psi (Lanza, 2004 in Lanza, Piazza and Vacante; 67).

more than a few mouths. As Informant M6 pointed out, an immediate positive result of the reform of the local government was that

"*finally people knew who was the mayor of the city; while under the old system there was so much turnover that nobody was sure who the mayor was and so who to make accountable for the administrative chaos, now people knew and this increased the administration transparency*" (M6).

Besides, due to the personalisation of the executive and his political and communication skills, Bianco become one of the most visible local political figures at national level[290] and leader of what in those years was called 'the mayors party' (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997), a pact between the newly elected mayors aimed at negotiating greater local autonomy within both regional and central institutions. Finally, in Catania, as well as in the rest of the country, a highly innovative move was the involvement in local government of non-political figures[291] chosen by the mayor as councillors on the basis of their standing and expertise[292]. According to informant A4

"*Bianco was particularly clever in choosing well-known prestigious figures from the university and the liberal professions who could bring consensus because of the quality of their job and who didn't want to became professional politicians but only serve the community for a certain period*" (A4).

[290] Besides, between 1995 and 2000 Bianco was President of The Italian Councils National Association (ANCI) and in 1998, he also founded *Centocitta'* a political movement focused on local issues and based on a network of cities around the country.

[291] Among them there were trade unionists, entrepreneurs, members of the city chamber of commerce, environmentalists, academics and member of civic society.

[292] By holding the power to appoint and/or dismiss councillors, Bianco neutralised 'the parties' monopoly' on the political CV of candidates and was, therefore, able to base the selective criteria on expertise rather than on political affiliation (Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997; 57).

Unquestionably, in terms of quality of democracy, Bianco's administration represented a clear turning point from the less and more recent past. In line with the reforms of those years, not only the mayor managed to obtain governmental stability but also to increase, on the one side, the level of responsiveness by giving a more programmatic profile to his government and, on the other side the level of horizontal and vertical accountability, by increasing the transparency of official action and decision.

Yet, while some informants described those years accordingly, in contrast, opinions differed when it came to the extent and effectiveness of those improvements. In this respect, informants P3, A2 and A4 stressed that due to the disadvantage point of the city any small positive change was erroneously perceived as a truly turning point.

"*The changes that occurred in those years were rather cosmetic solutions that temporarily covered the many scares left by the old parties but that in reality didn't heal them*" (P3).

"*There were visible but ineffective changes that as such didn't create any fundamental improvement for the local economy and for the many social emergencies the city had and still has*" (A2).

"*Bianco was later nicknamed the mayor-gardener because at the beginning of his mandate he put some flowerbeds in the main streets of the city centre; this simple thing was however seen as a turning point because the image of the city was slightly improved after decades of urban decline*" (A4).

As Trigilia (2005) suggests, to grasp the degree of change triggered by the reforms of local government of the early 1990s, it is necessary to distinguish between those policies which have visible and symbolic effects and relatively low costs such as urban greening, administrative re-organisation, the provision of basic services, cultural events and the school system, and those such as social policies, housing, transport and, more importantly, urban and

economic development, which required not only financial resources and long-term planning but also the collaboration of different interest groups and private economic actors[293]. Accordingly, as emerged from informants' accounts, although Bianco's administration performed particularly well within the first policy area, generally improving the image of the city, it nonetheless crucially failed to solve the many social and economic emergencies, especially regarding the most run down districts and more significantly to relaunch the city's economy and employment level[294].

In regards to the former group of policies, Bianco made a huge difference in comparison with the previous administrations not only providing those basic services such as rubbish collection, road maintenance, urban greening and street furniture that had been missing for decades, but also improving administrative efficiency and therefore attempting to reduce the level of corruption in both the town council and those public authorities which had until then been controlled by the old partitocratic regime (Gravagno, 2008)[295]. An example of this was given by informant A2 who, although expressing an overall negative view on the real effectiveness of the mayor's polices, nonetheless recognised that

"*in those years for the first time after the "sack of the city" local government re-organised the Urban Development Department, denounced the system of corruption that had governed it until then and for a short time promoted a new idea of urban quality against unlicensed buildings*" (A2).

[293] As the author stresses, in fact, in order to enact long-term policies local governments need to establish a long-term cooperation with higher institutional levels (regional and/or central) and dispose of a collaborative and competitive economic class.

[294] This point is, for instance, confirmed by Lanza and Timpanaro (1997), who stressed that Bianco's electoral manifesto mainly focused on basic but, given the administrative stagnation of the 1980s, very visible issues such as efficiency of the services and of the bureaucratic system, transport, environment and school system.

[295] As the author claims, Bianco neutralised the old parties' grip over the city public authorities by substituting most of the old CEOs with a-political figures (Gravagno, 2008; 241).

Moreover, informant P5 stressed that the new administration was also responsible for the so-called 'recovery' of some areas of the old city centre by encouraging the opening of restaurants, pubs, and commercial activities in order to reduce crime and alleviate social decay.

"*That revival was perhaps the most beautiful thing that happened in those years. It was a sort of revenge for the control exercised by the mafia in many poor areas of the old town. The "café concertos", pubs, [and] little restaurants that mushroomed in the same streets where a few years before it was dangerous even to pass by made the old centre much safer and attractive for people*" (P5).

All this was accompanied by the organisation of cultural events, some of national importance, such as music concerts, festivals and art exhibitions, which contributed to the city regaining a more positive reputation. In this respect informant M3 claimed that:

"*in those years there was a cultural frenzy, in particular within the music sector; it was a moment when you could produce and have an audience that was keen to go out and attend a concert, a thing that was just unthinkable during the 1980s for instance*" (M3).

Yet, as mentioned above, notwithstanding the fact that these administrative successes, local government didn't tackle the most urgent matters such as the social decline that affected many areas of the city and the majority of its population, the weak economy and the overwhelming level of unemployment[296]. While the process of recovery introduced by Bianco's administration included the most iconic part of the old city centre, the greater part of

[296] Yet, as claimed by Lanza and Timpanaro (1997), however, in order to enact these long-term socioeconomic and urban policies, the mayor and its government needed the approval of the city council where he had not the majority of seats (Ibid; 59).

it, along with the so-called satellite slums surrounding the city were ignored. In this respect informant S2 stressed that:

"*the real breakthrough would have been the recovery of those slums that together represent between 40 - 50% of the city's population, so an enormous number of people who live with a number of social problems and for whom nothing really changed*" (S2).

According to the Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission (2000), the lack of effective solutions to reduce social deprivation in these urban areas inevitably encouraged many people, especially young ones[297], to resort to criminal practices in the absence of employment opportunities. With one of the highest rates of early school leaving and without appropriate social services or school facilities, many minors in the city were exploited as cheap labour and also in the black economy. More significantly, though, the Parliamentary report stresses that this social decay and diffuse criminal behaviour among young inevitably became a formidable opportunity for the local mafia clans not only to recruit foot-soldiers easily but also to gain the consensus and recognition of large sections of the population by substituting for official authorities in those forgotten slums[298].

Yet, while such power hold by the mafia is often associated with the weakness and/or absence of state authorities in a given territory, on the contrary informant S4 argued that:

"*in these slums the official authorities are not absent but they purposely delegate organised crime to deliver the service they should deliver especially in periods of financial crisis as*

[297] Accordingly, during the 1990s, Catania began the 'Capital of juvenile delinquency' with the 13.4% of arrested minors in all the country. In 1999, 2226 cases of criminal activities involving minors in the city were recorded, these involved rubberes, extrotions, drug trafficking and murders (Ibid; 26).

[298] "A city that intentionally forgets those who live in the discomfort, in the underdevelopment and starvation pushes them in the hands of a criminal organisation which, pretending to be a paternal figure, is able to provide means of support for them and a chance of redemption against those authorities that abandoned them" (Ibid; 29)

during the 1990s. These areas are seen only as electoral constituencies that once under the control of the mafia can be a source of a vast consensus" (S4).

Although the arrest of the local boss, Benedetto Santapaola, in 1993 along with hundreds of associates, was optimistically described as a fatal blow for the mafia, the financial turmoil of the early 1990s instead provided an opportunity for the local clans not only to enlarge their grip on society but also to further control the local economy and infiltrate political institutions. It was in fact misleading and simplistic to imagine that it was possible to supress the Mafia just by arresting its members when the social, economic and political roles[299] that it held in the city remained untouched.

While the newly elected mayor managed to provide greater stability and accountability to the city government, his administrative actions were rather confined to symbolic policies perceived as revolutionary due to the disadvantaged starting position of the city rather than for their real effectiveness. Both the exclusion of the most deprived sectors of the population from the Catania Spring and the lack of any real economic development impeded a real change of course in the city; this, along with the return of the parties (Trigilia, 2005) [300] and their system of corruption, closed the window of opportunity opened up by the crisis.

However, in contrast with these negative outcomes and in line with the programmatic intentions of the reforms, during those years Bianco's administration managed to launch and support a virtuous set of networks between the local government, the local University and the Stmicroelectronics[301], which, between 1994 and 2001, triggered an expansion of the

[299] These are lack of economic development and occupational opportunities, juvenile delinquency, urban decay, corruption (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, Report 2000; 17).

[300] This is the reorganisation of the political system after the crisis of the early 1990s and the re-emergence of 'professional politicians' after an interlude of a-political administrative figures (Diamanti, 2003)

[301] At the beginning of the 1960s, as part of the extraordinary intervention for the south, in Catania it was established a company (ATES) operating in the electronics sector with the ultimate aim to activate local industrial activities in the sector. By the end of the 1980s, ATES was merged into the Franco-Italian STmicroeletronics (Porto and Pulvirenti, 2012).

electronic sector in the city providing consistent employment opportunities to many young local graduated (Avola et al 2012 in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012; Avola and Cortesi, 2013).

6.2.2 A local triple helix: the Etna Valley

As discuss in subsection 6.1.2, some informants identified in the reduction of public resources in favour of southern Italian regions due to the budgetary adjustments requested by Maastricht, the primary cause that destabilised the mass clientelistic parties and with them the already weak economy of the city. However, while the city economic leading sector, the construction industry, was led by a protected entrepreneurial class[302], at the beginning of the 1990s a new and innovative entrepreneurialism became to emerge around the local electronics sector and to engage into a set of positive synergies with both Catania University and the local government, giving birth to what in the city was nicknamed the 'Etna Valley[303]'.

To fully appreciate the novelty represented by the so-called Etna Valley within the local economic sector, it is necessary to frame it within the Triple Helix model developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesforff at the beginning of the 1990s (Leydesdorff, 2012). This model identifies in the production and distribution of 'socially organised knowledge' the key element for an economic development in the post-industrial scenario (Vaivode, 2015)[304]. While the previous model of economic development saw the state and the market establishing a mutual and substantially stable equilibrium[305], in the new model those

[302] As previously claimed, the relationship between the southern political power and economicelites has been described as based on the availability of public resources and essentially clientelistic in that it is informal, private and regulated by private rather than public interests (see Santoro, 2014).
[303] Apart from the electronic sector, the Etna Valley aglomaration is also composed by companies operating in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors (see Santangelo in Aykut and Ratha, 2004)
[304] Similarly, Asso and Trigilia (2010) argue that competition in the global market can be archived by only increasing the quantity and quality of knowledge involved in the development of new products.
[305] As stressed by Levdesdorff (2012), while the double helix model represents 'a relatively stable trajectory' the triple Helix model of university-industry-government relations is in permanent transition as each of its components have their own set of aims. "Thus, a trade-off can be generated between integration and differentiation, and new systems in terms of possible synergies can be explored and potentially shaped. As the

institutions that generate knowledge became to play a crucial role. Thus, the model sees the interaction of three sub-dynamics, university-industry-government, each one analytically independent from the others and each one playing a different role. If, according to Schumpter (1942 cite in Vaivode, 2015) innovation can be defined as the commercialization of invention, the role played by centres of knowledge production (university) is the one to generate new idea, the one played by the industry is to implement such ideas and finally the one played by the government is to provide, regulate and maintain the framework in which innovations are introduced[306].

In contrast with the construction industry, the development of a productive electronic sector in Catania was the result of such model in that it was triggered by "the reciprocal complementarity between entrepreneurial leadership, institutional action, social capital and investments into human capital" (Avola et al 2012; 197 in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012)[307]. In line with the more programmatic profile of Bianco's administration, by the middle of the 1990s the local government managed to sign a set of planning contracts, also and primarily with STMicrolectronics, and to allocate public funds[308] with the aim to increase the productivity and competitiveness of the local electronics district[309]. Besides,

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various bilateral translations function, a Triple Helix overlay can also be expected to develop as a system of meaning exchanges among differently coded expectations" (Ibid; 3).

[306] As claimed by Leydesdorff (2010) "Three sub-dynamics are reproduced as functions of a knowledge-based economy: (1) wealth generation in the economy, (2) novelty generation by organized science and technology, and (3) governance of the interactions among these two subdynamics by policy-making in the public sphere and management in the private sphere (Ibid; 4).

[307] Similarly, Santangelo (in in Aykut and Ratha, 2004) claims that "the concentration of foreign affiliates in the Etna Valley area *versus* other areas of the region can be attributed to basic locational factors. The econometric results gathered in this analysis show that, within Sicily, TNCs' locational decisions are driven by high local skills (also reflected in high wages), high degrees of trade openness and proximity to a university and large companies" (Ibid; 99).

[308] These funds were framed within, first, the so-called *contratti di programma* which sees the local public institutions entering into an agreement with big, medium or small companies to allocate funds for the development of the productive activities. Moreover, these funds were also part of those state transfer that in those years were sent to the southern region to encourage an increase in the employment level.

[309] As argues by Avola et al (in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012) in those year the local district undertook a crucial transformation in that from a site for the production of low-value electronic components became a site for the development of research and strategic production.

in line with the triple Helix model, this institutional action was followed by that "linear progression from scientific research to technology creation to innovative products" addressed by Vaivode (2015; 1064). In those years, in fact, in order to enhance the level of innovation in the local district, a series of collaborative networks were established between the Stmicroelectronics, Catania University and local and national research centres[310]. This was also paralleled by the growth of those university departments such as electronic engineering, computer science and physic which could provide a local reservoir of human capital (Avola et al. in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012) to the local district[311].
Finally, the development of and innovative profile acquired by the local electronic district not only encouraged external companies to invest and relocate in the local territory[312], but more significantly it boosted the growth of local ones operating as service providers within the district[313].

However, by the beginning of the new millennium, the development and growth of the so-called Etna Valley faced a crisis that is explained by the current literature as triggered by both international, national and local causes. Accordingly, as stressed by Avola et al. (in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012) an intrinsic weakness of a district such as the Etna Valley is to be particularly exposed to international economic and financial turmoil such as the one occurred between 2007 and 2009 being its production strictly reliant on the

[310] In those years the Catania Research Consortium (CCR) was create to connect the research carried out by the local university with the one carried out by the local companies and the CRN (National Research Council).
[311] As stressed by the authors, apart from a substantial increase in number of enrolments in those departments, the majority of graduates and Ph.D. candidates in these department carried out internships and research collaborations at the StMicroelectronics.
[312] In those years companies such as IBM, Nokia and Magneti Marelli relocated in Catania part of their design centres. All together, the district included around sixth high-tech companies with a total number of employees of 5000 units (Porto and Pulvirenti, 2012; 595).
[313] According to Avola et al. (in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012) around 200 companies operated in and around the district. Among those one could find companies providing generic or specialised services as well as new start-ups and pre-established companies. Moreover, as stressed by Porto and Pulvirenti (2012), the electronics hub in Catania gave also way to the development of technological clusters in several other Sicilian provinces such as Messina, Ragusa, Siracusa and Palermo.

positive or negative trends of other industries[314]. To this it must be added that in the last decades, due also to the lack of an effective industrial policy at European level[315], countries such as China and South Korea have managed to became the major productive hubs in the sector.

On the other hand, though, along with these exogenous factors, it is necessary to take into account a change of course in the programmatic attitude of both the local university and authorities (Ibid: 235-238). The role of promoter of new ideas and producer of human capital played until there by Catania University was ended by a change of governance that, rather than build new bridges, it impeded the renew of those set of collaborations previously established by the University with both the companies and research centres orbiting the Etna Valley.

Similarly, as claimed by Avola and Cortese (2013) the end of the positive trend for the local district was followed by the resurface of old institutional and structural vices which reduced the ability of both regional and the city authorities to promote long-term economic policies and therefore to govern those virtuous synergies that had characterised the local Triple helix model (Ibid; 394).

Along with the inability to solved the infrastructural inadequacy of the city, the local institutions become to be again characterised by never lasting decisional processes that inevitably affect the allocation of funds and with that the possibility to support the district and favour an economic development[316].

As previously pointed out, it was not only the availability of public funds that represented a

[314] As shown by the authors, in fact, both in 2000 and 2009 the district decreased its production also as a consequence of the international economic crisis.

[315] In particular, the inefficiency of the industrial policy at European level is identified in the weak support given for research and development as well as due to the internal competition between member states which reduced the competitiveness of the EU in favour of the Asiatic productive-hubs.

[316] As stressed by the authors, in fact, lack of programmatic politics, on the one side, hindered the development of a formal structure for the governance of the district and, on the other side, favoured again a fragmented fund allocations (Ibid; 232).

crucial factor for the development of the local district, but rather the programmatic criteria through which these funds were allocated. The infrastructural deficit of the city could but decrease both the attractiveness for external investments in the local territory and the competitiveness and productiveness of the local economic activities and it could not but be solved by a programmatic approach to policy-making.

As it will be discuss in the next chapter, the resurface of those old vice and weakness while did not fully compromise the integrity of the local electronics district[317], it reduced its potentiality and impeded the possibility to replicate such virtuous synergies in other economic sector of the city and with that the possibility of an effective economic development.

6.2.3 Much ado about nothing?

Despite the virtuosity of the electronic district in Catania, the increased power held by the local executive did not lead to a diffuse economic development. Yet, this partial failure could not be exclusively attributed to the city's mayor and his administration. As informant P5 argued, in fact, an undesirable effect of the personalization of the executive was that: "*in those years people had huge expectations of Bianco who clearly could not by himself solve the endless problems the city suffered from and take the blame which often belonged to others*" (P5).

Accordingly, to fully understand why the transition period under analysis didn't represent an authentic turning point it is also necessary to take into account the role played by other institutional and economic actors in narrowing the window of opportunity opened up by the crisis.

[317] Notwithstanding the crisis, in fact, the district did not suffer a major downturn both in terms of employment and production (see Avola et al, in Cesosimo and Viesti, 2012)

As argued by informant S2, the turmoil of the early 1990s by affecting the local political system inevitably also had an impact on the economic one which was highly reliant on public resource.

"*In Catania, the collapse of the old Dc regime meant not only a crisis of the public sector but also the end of the entrepreneurial system governed by the Cavalieri del Lavoro which represented a vast source of employment*" (S2).

This point is also stressed by the Anti-mafia Parliamentary report (2000), according to which the enigmatic[318] 'downsizing' of the Cavalieri's economic empire, in a city where the construction sector had always been the most important one, inevitably affected also all the small and medium sized manufacturing companies operating around it.

Yet, beyond the detrimental effects for the local economy, the fall of the Cavalieri's oligopoly *per se* could have become an occasion to finally to encourage the formation of a competitive and innovative entrepreneurial class. On the contrary, though, as some informants claimed, while the *Clean Hands* investigations had inspired reform of the public contract system in an anti-bribery direction[319], in Catania not major transformation really occurred. This is confirmed by a new series of local judicial investigations that took place between the middle and the end of the 1990s which again involved political, entrepreneurial and criminal actors and from which it emerged that the void left by the Cavalieri's cartel was filled by a new cartel, mainly composed of companies colluding with or directly controlled by local Mafia clans. As respondent S4 recalled:

[318] As stated by the report, the collapse of those groups remains a mystery; while their owners were all involved in the judicial investigations of the early 1990s both for corruption and collusion with the Mafia and some of them died during those years, the end of their economic empire was strangely reported as due to lack of capital notwithstanding the decades of economic dominance they had exercised.

[319] In February 1994, the so-called 'Merloni Law' was passed; it aimed at re-organised the public contract sectors around clear and homogeneous norms and principles so to eliminate the 'normative uncertainty' that had characterised the previous regime and facilitated the spread of corruption.

"*during Bianco's administration some important public contracts were put out to bid and won by entrepreneurial groups from North Italy. This gave all of us hope of a change as we thought that those companies had greater immunity to mafia pressure having their headquarters outside Sicily. However, we soon found out that they had won the contracts thanks to an under the table deal with local entrepreneurs linked to the local Mafia which in the meanwhile had increased its entrepreneurial role thanks to the collapse of the Cavalieri's empires*" (S4).

As shown by the investigations, the new anti-bribery and anti-mafia regulations were regularly circumvented by the development of new ways to manipulate public tenders such as the establishment of fake companies, for instance, in order to give the illusion of real competition between them[320]. More importantly, though, the investigations showed that the Mafia in Catania had evolved from the stage of mere parasitic extortion and/or control of the sub-contracting system to a stage of direct influence over public tenders thanks to the presence of well-placed facilitators in the bureaucratic and political system (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, Report 2000; 57-58). In this respect informant S4 argued that:

"*with this increased entrepreneurial activity the Mafia assumed its most important role which is not only to have a monopoly of violence in a given territory but also to acquire social capital, that is the ability to provide services not only in terms of protection but more importantly in terms of connections and mediation between different actors. Therefore it became a sort of indispensable connection between public and private interests*" (S4).

[320] During those years major public tenders for the construction of university and hospital facilities were won by a single company, the C.G.P. Costruzioni Generali, based in Emilia Romagna, thanks to the support provided by the local *Cosa Nostra* clan, in the total absence of competition (Anti-mafia Parliamentary Commission, Report 2000; 33).

According to informant A2, this evolutionary rather than transforming model of economic organisation is the direct result of the previous collusive and corrupted regime that had impeded the formation of an alternative and more ethical administrative and entrepreneurial culture:

"*the system of corruption acted as a natural selector in that it favoured the most corrupted actors and excluded the most ethical ones. During the Cavalieri era in order to succeed a company didn't need to be competitive but rather to belong to their cartel; so when the Cavalieri and their oligopoly bowed out they were replaced by those companies that until then had occupied a secondary position within the cartel*" (A2).

Similarly informant A3 also stressed that:

"*despite the crisis and the changes in the political arena, the lack of an emancipated economic class from the public distribution of resources remained an unchanged factor and forced entrepreneurs to carry on investing efforts and resources in searching for a privileged relationship with the public administration.*" (A3).

While a period of transition, such as the one under analysis, is predictably composed of a mix of new and old traits, in Catania any tangible turning point could only have been truly achieved by neutralising the democratic shortcomings that caused the degeneration and collapse of the old regime. On the contrary though, the perpetuation of systematic corruption and the increasing pervasiveness of the Mafia among public institutions, the economy and society along with the return of the parties and their particularistic appeals leave little doubt as to whether the course of the crisis in the city has to be considered a period of transformations or one of continuity with the past.

While Bianco effectively took advantage of the institutional reforms of local government unquestionably improving the level of governmental accountability and

responsiveness, beyond those symbolic and visible policies discussed above it seems that if anything changed it did so in terms of an evolution of the same model rather than a transformation of it. Accordingly, informant P6 described the so-called Catania Spring as a brief period during which an enthusiastic view of small and visible changes corresponded to a brief interruption of the old modus operandi:

"*there was a sort of submersion of those phenomena that had characterised the old regime. The clientelistic market was temporarily closed but both the clients and those second lines of the old parties were waiting for it to re-open. Similarly, those criminal networks weakened by the judicial investigations were frozen for a while but soon began to operate again*".

This uneven mix of superficial changes and high levels of concrete continuity is not only the result of the permanent presence of corrupt behaviour among economic and political elites but also, as the next section will discuss, the lack of a truly organised social response to the turmoil of those years and in particular to what a few kilometres away, in Palermo, was reaching its most dramatic momentum; the Mafia's most blatant head-on attack against the state.

6.2.4 Lack of critical thought

As previously mentioned, the crisis of the early 1990s had a multi-faced nature and different vantage points (Ginsborg, 2001). In this respect, without a doubt the city of Palermo epitomised the darkest aspect of this in that *Cosa Nostra* ended decades of brazen attack against the State with two spectacular terrorist bombings against the most successful anti-mafia prosecutors; Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. Both the 23rd of May and the 19th of July 1992 can be considered as black days in the Republican history of the country[321].

[321] In a heartfelt article after the funerals of Falcone, his wife and three of his bodyguards, Giuseppe D'Avanzo, a journalist of the daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, claimed that in Palermo that day the Italian Republic had died. "It died in the anger and contempt of that microscopic part of the city against a state often considered too

The two Palermo prosecutors, who had orchestrated the maxi-trials of the 1980s creating a new judicial and investigative anti-mafia strategy, had begun to symbolise the last part of the State in Sicily that stubbornly and scrupulously fought the Mafia. Their murders followed by five other bomb attacks perpetrated in Florence, Rome and Milan in 1993 shook the very foundations of the nation and, along with the anti-corruption investigations, further undermined the legitimacy of its political and institutional class.

Although *Cosa Nostra* in Palermo had for decades uninterruptedly perpetrated a strategy of violence against those who stood its way, the massacres in 1992, perhaps because of their brutality and/or the particular historical juncture the country had reached[322], triggered an emotional wave that spread from Palermo to every corner of the country and in the capital city gave way to a strong social and political reaction of 'civic sensitivity' which had arisen around the maxi-trial of the 1980s. In this respect, informant M1 described those Mafia attacks as the core narrative for whoever was experiencing the crisis from Sicily.

"*In Sicily that period has to be divided into different tracks; the first regards the news coming from Milan and Rome about the decline of the party system under the Clean Hands investigations, the second is the one directly experienced by us and concerns the Mafia massacre in 1992 which for us was the most local and deeply felt chapter of that crisis*" (S1).

compromised to be capable of or interested in defending its best representatives… in the embarrassment of many political figures arrived from Rome and booed by the massive crowd gathered outside the church…in the apathy of the many who considered Falcone the anomaly, the enemy to humiliate, to slander, to defeat" (La Repubblica 25/05/1992).

[322] While it is not within the scope of this research either to fully interpret the causes behind and the effects triggered by these dramatic events, their role and correlations within and with the economic and political turmoil of the early 1990s, it can be claimed however that the juncture between the crisis of authority within the political system, the economic deficit of the central state and anti-mafia and anti-corruption judicial reprisals threatened the main frame of reference the Mafia had relied upon until then and therefore forced it to a reaction (Young, 2011).

Yet, while the geographic closeness to Palermo may have changed the perception of the crisis in some, as stressed by other informants, in Catania those events didn't not trigger a truly and collective reaction or a rebellion as they did in Palermo and in many other cities around the country. In this respect informant S3 recalled the contrast between her personal shock and the general disregard she found in people:

"*in those moments the thing that struck me the most was the lack of any reaction in Catania. Personally, I was in shock and I remember the sadness in feeling almost alone in this and having nobody to talk to. I cannot recall any demonstration organised in the city while in Palermo hundreds of thousands were on the street. In Catania there was a sort of collective denial, a blocking of any critical thought*" (S3).

The discrepancy between the two major Sicilian cities cannot be explained just as a matter of geographic proximity or distance to the actual events. An alternative and sounder answer suggested by informants P5, P6 and M3, concerned the different way in which this criminal phenomenon operated in the two cities and the role it played within their social, economic and political systems[323].

"*Here the Mafia was not associated with the violence of the endless murders in Palermo; it has always been seen as dangerous only for its criminal enemies but innocuous for everyone else*" (P5).

"*The turmoil of those years, with the collapse of the old political regime or the so-called Sicilian spring with the first direct elections, or the massacres in Palermo, was a partial revolution in Catania because they questioned a system that had been in power for a very*

[323] As was discussed several times in Chapter 6, in contrast to the capital city, in Catania *Cosa Nostra* adopted a soft-strategy of no outright attack against local state authorities basing its strength lay not so much in the threat or exercise of violence but rather in being a recognised and legitimate part of the city institutional landscape.

long time in the absence of any dissent. This was not the case in Palermo where different forms of organised dissent took shape in those years, in Catania nothing like that happened" (P6).

"*The point to address is the cultural collusion of a large part of the bourgeoisie and professional class with the status quo. It is a kind of collusion that has slowly become a sort of painless process of turning away, of blindness. People have normalised everything pretending not to have any responsibility for how things are*" (M3).

This comparison between these two cities seems to suggest a direct correlation between the level of Mafia violence against official actors and the level of social reaction triggered. The long season of "excellent murders" in the capital city, culminating in the bombings in 1992, instilled step by step a sense of retaliation in people. On the contrary.in Catania, while Santapaola's clan decimated rival clans for almost a decade, extorted around the 80% of local economic activities (Gravagno, 2008), his soft-strategy of collusion with local state authorities validated the illusion that it was all about common gangsterism.

As it will be discussed in Chapter 8, such '*block of critical thought*' not only impeded the expression of a collective response to the violence perpetrated by the mafia, to the socioeconomic stagnation the city suffered from and to the widespread corruption of its political and economic elites and in that it favoured what some informants described as the end of the so-called 'Catania Spring' and the beginning of a new administrative season that, strongly resembling the old regime and its many shortcomings, closed that window of opportunity the crisis had opened.

6.3 Conclusions

The first analytical area that this chapter has dealt with concerned those anomalies that at the beginning of the 1990s, according to informants, questioned the partitocratic

system that had governed the city of Catania since the 1960s. In this respect, the explanatory model developed in chapter 3 was tested at local level in order to identify which among the causes of the crisis had a major impact (and which a minor one) on the city's political and economic system. Consequently the chapter focused on the 'course' of the crisis, that is those actions taken to scrutinise and transform the old regime and those actions taken to resist that transformation.

Accordingly, some informants claimed that a 'warning sign' of the crisis was the way the local political class had become a self-referential caste unable to reform itself, mainly engaged in a scientific division of public resources and therefore unable to resolve the numerous administrative inefficiencies and socioeconomic emergencies that the city suffered from. A glaring example of this was the discrepancy between the increasing power over politics, economy and society exercised by the local Mafia and the minimalistic attitude expressed by the entire city leadership at the conference "Catania; non solo Mafia" a few months before the collapse of the First Republic.

Yet, as the informant added, these warning signs also showed that the political system was not only inefficient but also unaffordable *per se*. The vast amount of public resources wasted to support corrupt exchanges and fuel the clientelistic system had brought the local council to a budgetary impasse and to an imminent decline that was only accelerated by the national turmoil of the early 1990s. Accordingly, the crisis in Catania was mainly triggered by both the collapse of the national political system and the economic restrictions which caused the closure of the clientelistic market and suddenly made the system of corruption inconvenient. It seems, therefore, that the city was not among those major scenarios such as Milan, Rome or Palermo where the crisis could be vividly observed, but, in the absence of a local demand for change, it rather passively suffered the effects of actions and events

occurred somewhere else. Once the national political system weakened, the local government and party system lost the political and financial support which had kept them going.

On the other hand, while the restrictions on public resources directly affected the local political system, the fall of the Berlin Wall, identified by authors as another major factor in the crisis, had few consequences at local level. Informants explained this pointing out that the ideological division could not have real leverage among an electorate largely accustomed to clientelistic appeals and mostly keen to a-ideologically support those parties, especially the Dc, better able to distribute benefits. Interestingly, as informant A4 suggested, the real ideological tension felt by both governing and oppositional parties was vaguely about the North/South divide and the redemption and compensation the south deserved after all the wrongs suffered since the unification of the country. As the numerous speeches at the conference in 1991 claimed, the responsibility for the socio-economic decline of the city of Catania was to be found in those unspecified northern political and economic interests which purposely damaged the city's reputation.

In contrast, though, local responsibilities were partially identified when, along with the collapse of the national political framework, the effects of the Clean Hands investigations finally arrived in the Sicilian city from Milan. As claimed by some informants, the action of the judicial system in those years can be considered a real 'turning point' in the city. As in the case for the anti-corruption pool in Milan and the anti-mafia one in Palermo, this change of course was the result of a generational turnover that saw a group of willing and young prosecutors taking over from the old judicial class and, encouraged by events at national level, attempting to re-establish the rule of law in the city. The overlapping of economic turmoil and the crumbling of the partitocratic system threatened that pact of reciprocity and solidarity established between the political and economic powers. This gave the prosecutors the opportunity to investigate as once again it led a few entrepreneurs to conveniently

abandon the ship before it sank and break the conspiracy of silence which had existed until then.

Yet, while some informants considered these investigations as a change of course others expressed more controversial views. In this respect, beyond some conspiracy theories concerning the judicial campaign both at national and local level, the anti-corruption investigations in Catania not only involved few cases but resulted in a dead-end of absolutions and/or statues of limitations. In contrast to Milan or other parts of the country, in Catania the conspiracy of silence had only partially broken down and apart from some show trials the majority of the political and economic class remained untouched and unpunished.

This blend of change, continuity and 'half-revolution' can also be found in the so-called course of the crisis that is the period of transition from the old to the new political regime. In this respect the reform of local government and the new role acquired by the executive power was described by informants as a major innovation and named the Catania Spring. Yet, while the direct election of Enzo Bianco in 1993 opened up a new administrative period of greater stability, transparency, accountability and responsiveness as well as initiated a set of virtuous synergies around the electronic district, the high rate of electoral abstention, the majority still held by the Dc in the council and, later on, the so-called return of the parties, closed the window of opportunity that the new mayor might have opened. As some informants claimed while the new executive effectively carried out those most visible policies which cost little, it failed to tackle the most pressing issues such as social decay in the slums built during the Dc era in which around half of the city's population lived, the chronic level of unemployment and the lack of any real economic development.

Whereas a significant part of the 'Catania Spring' led by Bianco consisted of the so-called 'recovery' of the most iconic parts of the old city centre, the majority of it, however, including the most under-privileged districts were ignored. Widespread unemployment and

social deprivation were described as the reason behind the involvement of many people, both young and old, in criminal activities. Besides, these areas forgotten by the city authorities easily fell under the controlled of the local Mafia clans which found them fertile ground to recruit foot-soldiers and to obtain legitimation and recognition.

However, although the reforms of the local government gave the mayor more room for manoeuvre, the failure to encourage economic development was explained by informants as also due to the lack of change in the local entrepreneurial class. The unexplained fall of Cavalieri's economic empire could, in fact, have been an opportunity to finally establish a free market, attack investments and raise the occupational level. On the contrary though, as became apparent from a new wave of investigations during the mid-1990s, the void left by Cavalieri's cartel was filled by a new one led this time directly by the local Mafia clans and formed by all those second-line companies that used to belong to the previous cartel. Ultimately, if the end of Cavalieri's oligopoly gave something it was the opportunity for organised crime to evolve from a parasitic and predatory stage to a stage of symbiotic correlation with local formal power.

Therefore, what seems to emerge is a crisis during which to a few actions taken to correct the old democratic paradigm corresponded a substantial degrees of continuity with the past. As informant P6 claimed, the crisis triggered a temporary suppression of those *modus operandi* that nonetheless were not eradicated. Clients and patrons suspended exchanges until the consensus market had opened again. The judicial investigations resulted in a brief interruption of these criminal networks orbiting around the sources of public funds.

Finally, a degree of continuity was also found in the lack of a truly organised social dissent to the massacre carried out by *Cosa Nostra* in Palermo in 1992. According to informants, despite the geographic proximity to the Capital city, the soft-strategy adopted by Santapola in Catania based on recognition and legitimation didn't inspire a reaction of 'civic

sensitivity' that in Palermo and around the country was developing into anti-mafia movements. This apathy was explained as a mix of lack of critical thought and widespread cultural collusion that caused people to adapt rather than dissent.

As the next and concluding chapter will show, while the so-called Catania Spring represented a turning point in terms of administrative stability and accountability the many forces resisting change hampered a real transformation of the old regime instead triggered its evolution and restoration into the so-called Second Republic.

Chapter 7

The Second Republic in Catania

7.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter focuses on the period that followed the transition between the First and Second Republic in Catania examined in chapter 6. Here again, the analytical areas taken into account are the local political, economic and social spheres and their correlations in order to explain why the 'post-crisis' period in the city has to be considered an evolution rather than a transformation of the old into the new regime.

While at national level this phase was characterised by the so-called 'return of the parties' (Trigilia, 2005) that is the reorganisation of the political system after the crisis of the early 1990s and the re-emergence of 'professional politicians' after an interlude of a-political administrative figures (Diamanti, 2003), at local level it was described by many informants as the end of the 'Catania Spring'. This meant above all the beginning of a new era of clientelistic politics, corruption and socioeconomic stagnation, this time orchestrated by the centre-right government[324], that led the council to a deficit of over £1bn and the quality of democracy in the city to a new decline.

In political terms, the combination of partial innovations and deep-root continuities that characterised Bianco's administration[325] had partially anticipated what shape the Second Republic would take in the Sicilian city. As already stressed, while Bianco's election in 1993 and 1997 appeared as a potential change of course after decades of conservative Dc governments, during those years the centre-right coalition, composed by many ex-Dc

[324] This government was formed by a large coalition composed by 10 different right-wing and centrist parties such as Fi, An, Ccd and Cdu.

[325] See Chapter 6 – Section 6.2.1

members, gained control of both the provincial and regional government[326] and, by the beginning of the new millennium, it conquered the city council for more than a decade. More interestingly though, as some informants stressed, while in the general election the centre-right coalition was dominated by Fi and its undisputed leader, Silvio Berlusconi, at the local one, those minor parties, such as the Ccd and the Cdu, which had arisen from the ashes of the Dc and that had little electoral support at national level, acquired power within the coalition at the local one by conquering a good portion of the old transversal electoral areas once controlled by the local Dc[327]. This, in turn, decreased the quality of democracy in the city as it triggered political fragmentation within the coalition that lowered the programmatic profile of the previous administration, encouraged covert negotiations and with that the level of administrative accountability and responsiveness, impeding again long-term policies and plans that could have addressed the several critical points in the city, the first of which was its socioeconomic underdevelopment.

Accordingly, as section 7.2 will examine, in economic terms the so-called Second Republic didn't modify the old model. Public resources, now coming also from the EU, remained the major source of both employment opportunities and entrepreneurial activities. Besides, while between 1998 and 2002 central government carried out some reforms of public administration to reduce and rationalise its labyrinthine structure[328], as suggested by some informants, an increasing number of public assisted companies, associations and cooperatives operating in the third sector were directly or indirectly formed by political actors

[326] As claimed in chapter 6, in 1993 an An candidate, Sebastiano Musumeci, was elected President of Catania Province. Besides, in 1996, a Fi candidate, Giuseppe Provenzano, was elected President of the Region.
[327] Accordingly, despite for the municipal election in 2000 Fi resulted the biggest party within the coalition (with the 43.3% of votes), the Ccd obtain the 13.8% of votes and the Cdu the 8.5%.
[328] These reforms aimed at streamlining the administrative system and the management of its resources, to improve the quality of the services also by privatising some of them and to provide more autonomy and responsibilities to local authorities.

and exploited as electoral apparatuses[329]. Clearly, as in the past this further blurred the line between public power and the economic market and once again diverted resources to where it was politically convenient.

A similar burred line between state and economy regarded also the local industrial sector; this remained operating mainly around the publically financed construction industry and again dominated by monopolistic entrepreneurial cartels within which by then the local mafia acquired a leading role. Besides, clans still heavily affected the economic market via a deep rooted racketeering system that involved an increased number of traders and entrepreneurs[330]. Control over the city economy exercised by both the political class and organised crime impeded its development as it allowed again investments and expansion only in those sectors where this control was possible, and selected its entrepreneurial class on the basis of its proximity to these powers.

Finally, section 7.3 will look at how such a political re-arrangement was the major cause of further social and urban decline in the city and therefore unable and/or unwilling to offer any programme of measures to solve the problem. As was the case during the 1970s and 1980s, even in the new millennium Catania lay at the bottom of national league tables[331]. The lack of basic services in large parts of the city, poor infrastructure, high levels of unemployment across gender, age and social classes, widespread poverty, social deprivation, illiteracy and criminal behaviour among the sub-proletarian classes are just a few of the factors that contributed to the city's failure to make any progress.

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[329] This point is also suggested by Santoro (2014) who claims that the electoral function once given to the public sector was during the 1990s replaced by the so-called private assisted sector which receiving copious amount of public funds, were exploited by patrons as a further occupational reservoir (Ibid; 249-250-251)

[330] According to *SosImpresa* (an anti-racketeering association founded in 1991) in Sicily the 70% of traders were subject to one or more forms of extortion. In Catania the 80% (*SosImpresa* Report, 2012).

[331] As it will be examined in section 7.2.3, in 2007, in the annual ranking carried out by the national daily business newspaper, *Il Sole 24 ore,* on the quality of life in hundreds of Italian cities, between 2000 and 2010 Catania, traditionally placed among the lowest, had an overage position of 100 out of 103 cities

According to informants operating in the social and economic sectors this *status quo*, however, was again exploited rather than solved by political patrons who, with their unequal distribution of benefits, maintained the social disparities produced by the old regime and affected again the ability in people to aggregate around common issues and goals and therefore to question those who governed them.

7.1 The new that resembled the old

This opening section will focus on the way informants described, first, the local party system, that is the shape that the 'fragmented bipolarism' (D'Alimonte and Bartolini, 1997; Fabbrini, 2009), discussed in chapter 3, took at local level; secondly, the political class that operated within that system, so to ultimate determine whether the post-crisis period saw an increase or decrease in terms of quality of democracy in the city. Needless to say, a comparison will be made with the old Dc regime governing the city until the early 1990s and its 'professional and business politicians'[332] in order to draw an initial conclusion on the degree of continuity and discontinuity found between the pre and post crisis periods.
In this last respect, a first suggestion was provided by informant P6 and M2 who described both the re-organisation of the local party system and its political class as a further deterioration when compared with the partitocratic system.

"*The previous system, according to which politics represented an opportunity to loot public funds, to get whatever it was possible to get, was reintroduce in those years but, although it may sound hard to believe, in a more unscrupulous way. This is in part because in Catania almost everyone remained unpunished by the local Tangetopoli and also because there was no longer the old parties' apparatus that somehow used to control the actions of its members*" (P6).

[332] See Chapter 5 – Section 5.1.2 and 5.1.3

"*While the Dc's members used to run the most unscrupulous clientelistic system and many colluded with the mafia, they still behaved in a respectable way and had a general dignity. On the other hand, the level of corruption and collusion which the centre-right government openly reached had never before been seen. More than in the past, politics has been seen as an opportunity*[333] *to grasp anything but with less and less need for concealment.*" (M2).

Yet, differently than in the past, within the re-surfacing of those democratic shortcomings under which the old regime had collapsed, the clientelistic mass parties were replaced by political organisations designed around and led by individual leaders who managed to bypass the weaker party structures and build their power base by acquiring electoral offices from which they developed their own clientelistic clusters via personal rather than party networks. As will emerge, this new leader-centred clientelism rather than constitute a transformation was a further evolution to add to those occurring between the 'old notables' and the 'professional politicians' during 1960s or those between the latter and the 'business politicians' in the 1980s.

Notwithstanding the changes, in fact, both the political success of leaders and their followers continued to depend less on their administrative expertise and more on their ability to access key public offices, control resources and re-fuel the demand of clients at the expense of a coordinated administration of the city.

7.1.1 A new post-Dc centre

A first element of deterioration pointed out by some informants in regard to the new political system in Catania was its high level of party fragmentation[334]. Despite the new

[333] As suggested by Di Mascio (2012), and discussed in chapter 3, both the higher electoral mobility, when compared with the electoral stability of the first Republic, and the lack of steady party hierarchical structures, increased 'the opportunistic behaviour' of individual leaders and followers who dispose of short periods to maximise their gains.

[334] Differently than during the 1980s when the number of party was between 6 and 8, for the local election in 2000 there were six mayoral candidates and 23 different political parties of which 12 obtained seats in the

majoritarian and competitive electoral system and the power given to the mayors were aimed at increasing the accountability and responsiveness of local governments, given the exceptional level of party fragmentation the system remained shaped by proportional and consensual criteria. This, as it occurred during the Dc regime, increased the veto power hold by political parties at the expense of governmental responsiveness and encouraged the return of covert negotiations in the decision-making process at the expense of the transparency and therefore accountability of the system.

Besides, as already claimed, the centre-right coalition did not have its centre of gravity solely in Fi but was also substantially composed of those post-Dc centrist forces that gradually managed to gain substantial electoral support giving birth to what informant S1 described as

"*a big post-Christian Democrat centre led by those ex-Dc leaders who survived the crisis and who monopolised many local electoral and public offices from which they organised their clientelistic networks*" (S1).

Similarly informant M6 argued that:

"*These new centrist leaders by obtaining electoral offices such as that of mayor, or president of the province or even as a council member and therefore by controlling public resources had exceptional electoral support and managed to impose their own personal parties within the coalition and dictate the line within them*" (M6).

Looking at the electoral data, then, whereas in the general election this centrist political area gained low electoral support (3.2% in 2001, 6.7% in 2006 and 5.6% in 2008),

council. This fragmentation increased for the local election in 2005 when there were seven mayoral candidates and 31 parties of which 14 obtained seat in the council.

at local level its electoral weight was as great as, if not greater than that of the major centre-right parties such as Fi and An. When the Fi MEP, Umberto Scapagnini, was elected mayor of Catania in 2000 his party obtained 43.3% within the coalition against the 13.96% gained by the post-Dc parties , while in 2005, when Scapagnini was re-elected, the centrist parties had already grown within the coalition, achieving a slightly higher result (26.9% against the 28.6% of Fi) that grew further in the elections in 2008, when the centre-right candidate, Raffaele Stancanelli became mayor[335]. On that occasion, in fact, the Udc, Mpa, Cds and Sfl obtained 37.5% (18 seats) of the electoral votes within the coalition of parties supporting Stancanelli against the 35.7% obtained by the Pdl[336].

Thus, while at national level voters began to adapt to a more competitive model shaped by the opposition between a left and right coalition, in Catania, after a '*momentary submersion*'(P6) during the immediate post-crisis period, voters with little ideological aspiration remained linked to a consensual model and therefore searched once again for similar political appeals to those that the old local Dc had provided for decades.
These clientelistic appeals where found not only in Fi, indicated by informants as the party where a copious number of ex-Dc and Psi members converged after the crisis[337] but also in these post-Dc parties formed and led by ex Dc patrons.

As discussed in chapter 1, to fully grasp the way parties develop their organisations and the way the electorate behaves over time, especially in a period of political

[335] In 2008 Umberto Scampagnini resigned as mayor of Catania to run as MP for the imminent general election with the centre-right coalition Pdl. The same year Scancanelli, another centre-right candidate, was elected city mayor on the first round with the 54.5% of votes.
[336] Similar electoral trends can also be found in the provincial elections held in 2003 when Raffaele Lombardo (see section 7.1.2) was elected at the first round with the 64.9% of votes against Claudio Fava (31.3%). Within the centre-right coalition the centrist parties obtained the 28.7% of votes against the 19.3 obtained by Fi.
[337] While, in line with the anti-partitocratic mood of the early 1990s, even Fi selected a-political candidates (among them the movie director Franco Zeffirelli and the local entrepreneur Ilario Floresta) for the local election in 2000 its major representatives were for the majority ex Dc members (among them Giuseppe Firrarello who had hold key positions within the local Dc and Guido Ziccone ex Dc mayor between 1989 and 1991). On this see also Lanza and Piazza (2002).

transformation such as the one under analysis, it is necessary, as suggested by Shin and Agnew (2008), to take into consideration the geographical context in which they are set. The two authors, in fact, in challenging the view according to which "Italy is becoming electorally homogenous with the arrival of Berlusconi's videocracy" (ibid; 7) stress the role played by local social processes of learning and everyday experiences in determining both the way people vote and the parties firm hold within a given territory[338].

In this respect, informant M9 explained the return of clientelistic politics as a natural development in a city as Catania given the continuity both in terms of socioeconomic fragility and political action.

"*How do you think these new political parties could develop their organisation and firm hold on an electorate so disinterested in ideological and/or programmatic appeals? In the same way as the Dc of the 1960s, parties such as Fi had to rely on those political figures that were the only ones able to attack and mobilise that kind of electorate*" (M9).

A similar view was provided by informant M2 who saw the new system as the direct outcome of the old.

"*The deterioration in terms of the political class we had in this city with the so-called Second Republic has been possible thanks to the old Dc regime that, corrupting people so profoundly, created the cultural conditions for the new regime to settle and prosper. Local public opinion was transformed into an amoral mass unable to think critically and therefore keen to support the next political patron throwing them an electoral bone*" (M2).

[338] As the authors claim, the new parties in order to gain a grip at local level had to take into account local priorities and difference in electoral behaviour. Thus, while in the north the issues was the reduction of taxes and the electoral appeal was still ideological, in the south the political appeal had to regard the continuity in state transfer (Ibid; 13).

Accordingly, in continuity with the past, political party in Rome structured their appeal and political agenda at local level by relying on those local patrons able to provide votes through a clientelistic control of the electorate. Given that social and economic opportunity remained closely dependent from public authorities and resources, this political development was facilitated by an electoral body substantially accustomed to and in need of an individual mobilization and distribution of benefits.

The return of clientelistic politics in the city, of which the next subsection offer a vivid empirical instance, could not but have a detrimental impact on the quality of democracy. As it was the case during the First Republic, such type of governance again questioned the principle of equality with its unequal distribution of particularistic benefits, lowered the transparency of the system and therefore its horizontal accountability, impeded the development of long-term policies at the expense of the level of responsiveness, and, as it will discussed later in this chapter, encouraged the return of endemic corruption undermining again both the rule of law and the horizontal accountability of the system

7.1.2 The new political patrons: a case study

It was claimed above that although the re-structuring of the political arena meant above all the return of political patronage this was no longer organised around the parties' apparatuses but rather around single patrons who, occupying an electoral office and controlling the resources passing through it, could use a personal army of followers-members to weave their own clientelistic web[339]. As informant M6 claimed in fact:

[339] According to Calise (2000), in line with the supremacy of the leader over the party organisations, at local level many of these ex 'professional politicians' gave birth to micro-clientelistic parties (*micro-partiti notabiliari*) that substituted the ex Dc factions and were strictly designed around their leader (Ibid; 65-66).

"*whereas before you had the parties that from outside determined what the mayor and the councillors had to do, now you had the holders of elected offices who interacted directly with the electorate and bypassed their own parties*" (M6).

A similar account was provided by informant A1 who stressed that:

"*the old 'professional politician' was someone who, despite all, had to account to his/her own party and work for it as he/she could only have a political career thanks to the party. Now without these types of party organisations, politics coincide with the elected office which is the only thing that guarantees the personal survival of these new patrons and their personalistic political organisations*" (A1).

It seems, therefore, the manner in which the clientelistic appeal was re-structured within the new political regime, was in somehow determined by that 'personalization of the executive power' (Lanza, Piazza and Vacante, 2004) discussed in chapter 6[340]. Accordingly, the old political parties gathered and filtered requests coming from the electorate through their own apparatus. While there were both local and national charismatic leaders, they still operated within a collegially and hierarchically organised system and so they had to continuously refer to in their actions. On the contrary, both the greater power given to the executive offices and the simultaneous breakdown of the old party organisations saw the holders of those offices, whether it was a national Premier or a mayor, directly engaging with the electorate and acquiring the overall power previously held by the parties' apparatuses.

With reference to the city of Catania, the most frequent example given by informants of this new leaders-centred political re-arrangement was that of the already mentioned Raffaele Lombardo, an ex Dc errand-boy who escaped the local *Clean Hands* investigations

[340] This at national level had its major but not only expression in Silvio Berlusconi personalization of political narrative that gave birth to what Mauro Calise (2016) defines as 'the democracy of the leader'.

to re-emerge after the storm was over. While he shared with the old 'professional politicians' practices of bestowing favours, making covert deals, placing his own 'place-men' in key administrative offices and distributing public resources in a privatistic manner, in contrast with the past, Lombardo acted as a front-man basing his political success less on his affiliation to one party or another and more on securing major electoral offices from which he established his own personal clientelistic party, the Mpa.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Lombardo began his career in one of the regional Dc factions in direct competition with that led by Antonino Drago[341]. After having held office in both the Catania council and the Palermo regional parliament, in 1992 he was involved in a pre-*Clean Hand* investigation into corruption in the public health sector[342]. Convicted for abusing his office, he was subsequently acquitted on appeal.

Yet, his troubles with the law had only just begun. Throughout his political career, in fact, the Sicilian politician has been under investigation in several judicial proceedings with accusations ranging from criminal association aimed at fraud against the public administration to vote buying[343] and external association with the mafia[344]. Even though he was initially convicted on several occasions, including a prison sentence of six years and eight months for external association with the mafia[345] he was acquitted on appeal in most cases.

Lombardo's frequent implication in criminal investigations was perhaps one of the collateral effects of a political career that from informants' accounts clearly was dominated

[341] The faction was led by Calogero Mannino who occupied key office both at regional and national level during the 1980s.
[342] See *Il Correre della Sera – Concorso truccato: in cella l'assessore* 23/04/1992
[343] See *La Repubblica – Promozioni facili a Catania indagato anche Lombardo* 16/01/2011
[344] See *La Repubblica – Lombardo sotto inchiesta a Catania;* "*concorso esterno con la mafia*" 29/03/2010
[345] See *La Repubblica – Mafia condannato Lomabrdo 6 anni e otto mesi di reclusione* 19/02/2014

by the old criteria of power accumulation and clientelistic control of the electorate. According to informant M4:

"*Lombardo is the most important example that things in Catania have not changed much. He belonged to the second rank of the Dc and therefore he was not involved in the Tangetopoli investigations. When the storm was over, he was among the first to successfully re-adopt the old model of conquering public offices and building clientelistic nets*" (M4).

Similarly, informant E7 claimed that:

"*having grown up in the local Dc, he was an excellent weaver of networks; thus, within the new political system he re-established his networks which were composed of an army of people he managed to place everywhere*" (E7).

An additional comment was provided by informant P6 who stressed:

"*Lombardo can be considered the one who first and foremost re-established in a big way the system of dividing up and looting public resources and goods which had briefly been interrupted during the Catania Spring*" (P6).

Within the new leader-centred political arrangement, Lombardo's 'scientific clientelistic system'[346] was designed around the increasingly powerful electoral offices he managed to secure and hold[347].

"*By beginning in Catania, Lombardo managed to enlarge his personal circle initially by putting his men in key public offices in the city and from there in a system of expanding*

[346] See *La Repubblica – Clientelismo scientifico, il finto modello Catania* 28/03/2008

[347] Accordingly, in chronological order, he became Vice-Mayor of Scapagnini in 2000, resigning in 2003 when he was elected president of Catania province by a vast majority of the electorate (64.9%) on the first ballot. In 2008 he resigned again to run for the presidency of the Region which once more he won in the first ballot with 65.3% of the votes.

circles he extended his grip by conquering the provincial and regional government. In doing so he ended up controlling every public office and those resources associated with them" (M6).

The ever increasing clientelistic circles built by Lombardo on the basis of his collection of electoral offices ended up including a large part of the public sector and the publically assisted groups of associations, cooperatives and companies operating in the service sector. That primarily gave the Sicilian patron extended power over the city's economy and employment market. With reference to this, for instance, informant E7 recalled that:

"*the health system in Catania was entirely under his control as he had assigned all the departments to consultant physicians close to him. Once, during one of his political campaigns, there was a lengthy interruption to the provision of health care in many hospitals in the city because Lombardo had organised a conference in order to talk to the entire healthcare staff*" (E7).

A second example was provided by informant S2 who on the basis of his long professional experience in the social sector said that:

"*At the peak of his career, Lombardo managed to control 85% of the social cooperatives operating in Catania and its province. Some of them were those once under the control of the local Dc, but many others were exclusively set up as part of his vast consensus machine*" (S2).

The best and most telling example of this concentric clientelistic system was the accidental discovery on the web of a zip file containing what the national local press renamed

'Lombardo's ledger'[348]; this was a database composed of an extraordinary variety of clients' requests listing names, addresses, contacts numbers and, more importantly, the benefit to be provided. In this regard informant M4 claimed that:

"*apart from the usual requests for a job or career advancement, the ledger consisted of at least thirty thousand folders in which you could find everything you can image and more. From a request to jump the queue for a kidney transplant, to another to access a specific class in a primary school or a recommendation to arrange a pass in a public examination to become a lawyer or a member of the Secret Services. Besides, along with numerous requests for specific funding such as the one to refurbish a church, or for the opera season etc., there was also the request by a local mafia boss to find a place for his son at the city airport*" (M4)[349].

More importantly though, as informant M5 argued, even without the old party apparatuses, Lombardo's system strongly resembled the multi-layered clientelism previously governed by the local Dc in that it replicated and exacerbated social disparities via an unequal distribution of benefits.

"*The kind of benefits distributed was proportional to the type of client under question. While in slums like Librino, where Lombardo received an enormous amount of votes, some people are keen to sell their vote just for a bag of groceries*[350]*, for many others the major appeal is*

[348] See *Sudpress – Il Libro Mastro di Lombardo. I Finanzieri che chiedono la raccomandazione* 15/06/2012 http://www.sudpress.it/esclusivo-il-libro-mastro-di-lombardo-i-finanzieri-che-chiedono-la-raccomandazione/.

[349] Besides, as claimed by *Il Corriere della Sera* (*Lombardo; in rete il libro dei favori* 30/04/2008) among those clients who sent directly or indirectly (through his brokers) to Lombardo written notes with their name and requests there were numerous political actors who requested public works, service outsourcings, public offices in different sectors.

[350] During the trial of Lombardo for external association with the mafia, it emerged from ex-mafia members who turned state's witnesses that local clans used to sell even drugs in exchange for electoral support to Lombardo and his brother Angelo (see https://catania.livesicilia.it/2016/04/06/processo-lombardo-parla-nizza-compravamo-i-voti-con-la-droga_374200/).

still the dream of a job. The latter group can include both members of the working and professional classes. Clearly, when it comes to powerful actors, the benefit on offer has to be commensurate to the financial and electoral support they can provide" (M5).

This crucial level of continuity was explained by informant A3 with the distinction between transformative and evolutionary crisis which strongly recalls the one between 'authentic' and 'fake' crises proposed by Burckhardt (1943)[351].

"*Despite the breakdown of the old mass clientelistic parties, those socioeconomic conditions that had kept them going remained essentially unchanged. Hence, the re-organisation of the political system, that is its rootedness in the territory, here in Catania, as in many parts of the south, could not but be based on the political-oriented control and distribution of public offices on which the majority of the economy and occupational market strictly depended. Therefore, if we want to think in terms of change it can be claimed that the city has been subject to evolutionary changes within the system rather than transformative ones of the system*" (A3).

7.1.3 Little resources vs big resources

Within this evolutionary transformation of the city political system, a further factor mentioned by informants concerned the availability of resources this latter could rely on to fuel the clientelistic market. This theme is strongly linked to the main hypothesis proposed by the present study to explain the crisis of the early 1990s both at national and local level. As claimed both in chapters 3 and 6[352], rather than having an ideological or moral origin the crisis had more to do with the end of uncontrolled public spending and in the south with the end of the so-called `extraordinary intervention'. This was the uninterrupted flow of public

[351] See Chapter 2 – Section 2.2
[352] See respectively Chapter 3 – Section 3.2 and Chapter 6 – Section 6.1

money sent by the central state to the south, officially to tackle its backwardness but unofficially invested by the local political classes to gain and maintain electoral strength. When the system ran out of money (Sassoon, 2008; Crainz, 2012) to meet EU parameters the partitocratic era drew to a close.

Yet, was it really the end of extraordinary intervention? Given that the poor socioeconomic standards of the city remained an unsolved matter, its economic market mainly publicly assisted and that the new local political class was an evolution rather than a transformation of the old one, it is not, in fact, surprising that in order to re-establish networks of relationships with clients the new political class needed resources.
On this point, while some informants claimed that there was a restriction in resources, others argued on the contrary that resources kept on coming but rather than exclusively from Rome they also began to arrive from the EU[353]. Accordingly, while informant E3 and E8 pointed out that:

"*in comparison with the past, resources were significantly less and this of course had serious repercussions on the level of employment both in the public sector and especially in the local industry*[354]*"* (E3).

"*today the local government has, on the one hand, much more administrative responsibility due to the devolution from central to local government over the last twenty years*[355] *but, on*

[353] This point is also supported by Santoro (2014) who claims that, being the hegemony of the southern Italian political elites essentially clientelistic and therefore in need of resources, the funds from the EU are attracted with ad hoc plans and fragmented in particularistic allocations (Ibid; 248 note 3).
[354] According to the local ANCE (the Building Contractors National Association) following the international financial crisis between 2008 and 2012 more than a quarter (25.8%) of investments in the construction industry were lost, similarly the public work sector lost 37.2% of investment. This as in the past affected the manufacturing sector orbiting the construction industry (ANCE, Catania-report 2012).
[355] The direct election of the cities mayors and provincial and regional presidents in fact accelerated a framework of reforms that since the 1970s had attempted to decentralise administrative tasks to local authorities. With the beginning of the Second Republic this devolutionary process was further helped by a series of legislative actions aimed at giving local authorities more power and therefore more responsibility over the management of public resources (Santoro, 2014).

the other hand, they have far fewer resources at their disposal and constantly risk going in default" (E8),

informant S1 and S3 claimed that:

"*things have not changed whatsoever; put more simply now the money coming from the European Community has taken the place of money previously coming from the central state but they are still used to support the consensus machine and therefore fragmented into thousands of mostly useless projects*" (S1).

"*Basically resources are managed in continuity as in the past with difference that today it is all about European funds when before it was about the ministerial ones. Yet, as in the past, these funds are managed and distributed by public offices under the control of politicians around whom the clientelistic system is organised. We are talking about an enormous amount of money coming from the EU officially requested for worthwhile projects, such as alternative energy or training courses for young people, that in reality is used for political interests*" (S3).

Ultimately informant J3 suggested a further way local patrons managed to gain resource:

"*today in order to access resources local politicians artificially create emergencies which of course are not dealt with and therefore can be exploited to ask for more; in this way an emergency can last even ten or fifteen years. Besides, maintaining a state of emergency is a good way to bypass control and verification of expenditure. The numerous refuse crises during the last decades, or the volcanic ash, or the anti-seismic plans, are just a few of the endless examples one could give. Whenever something happens, a special commissioner is appointed with extraordinary powers and extraordinary funds*" (J3).

More interestingly, as previously claimed, with a public sector not anymore extendable, patrons began to exploited the assisted private sector composed by an increasing number of companies, associations and cooperatives that partially substituted for public authorities in the supply of welfare and social services both to attract resources and to dispose of jobs and services to distribute to clients.

In this respect, one of the most frequent examples provided by informants regarded the so-called CAFs (Tax Advice Centres) that are private organisations financed by the INPS (National Social Welfare Institution) which provide support to the public in matters relating to their income tax and many other bureaucratic processes but which in reality, as claimed by informant S3, ended up being run by politicians as grass-root organisations for gathering consensus[356].

"*The CAFs mushroomed especially in the most deprived areas of the city not particularly to provide services and grant rights but to gain political consensus. An elderly person who should receive a disability pension, would, after not having received help from the public authorities, contact a CAF, which more often than not was controlled by a politician, and there he will receive help in exchange for his electoral support*" (S3).

While the politically oriented use of public services was not a novelty, in contrast to the past, the CAFs, as in the case of many of those companies, associations and cooperatives under analysis, were no longer offices associated to the parties but rather offices run by the parties but financed by the central state[357].

[356] According to Santori (2014), by the beginning of the new millennium, especially in the south, the CAFs substituted the old party sections as a place to collect clients requests and, more importantly, differently than in the past the CAFs were under the control of single political leaders and not of party and/or faction apparatuses.

[357] It follows that, as suggested by Santoro (2014) "it is not that today there aren't public resources able to feed political exchange (as the public service was for decades); it is rather that this is, rightly or wrongly, represented by the assisted private sector" (Ibid; 249). Besides, as the author suggests, this new arena of the political market can be considered an evolution of the old assisted capitalism sustained by a diffuse but not programmatic flow

However, although it is beyond the scope of the present research to provide figures showing the total public resources allocated to the southern regions and metropolitan areas, even though resources might have diminished, in Catania clientelistic practices remained well-rooted as both the employment market and the city's economy remained largely dependent on them. Besides, as pointed out by informants M4 and M2, whereas a reduction in available resources could initially affect the ability of the patrons to deliver individual benefits to their clients in the long run it increased their power as they managed a scarcer and more sought after benefit[358].

"*During an economic crisis the power of those who control public spending inevitably increases. It is inversely proportional, there are fewer employment opportunities for clients therefore they need, more than ever, to sell their vote not necessarily for a permanent job but just a temporary or part-time one*" (M4).

"*Today what political patrons most frequently offer is a precarious employment contract in order to keep their clients in check so they will need to renew their electoral support in order to have their contracts renewed*" (M2).

Ultimately, as it will be examined in the next section, the return of clientelistic politics impeded any planned or efficient administrative action and made any change of course impossible as well as failing to offer any solution either to the economic stagnation of the city or to the many social crises affecting a large section of its population.

of public investments that had characterised the relationship between state and market during the First Republic (Ibid. 250).

[358] As claimed in chapter 5, this point is also supported by Caruso (2013) who claims that patron are strengthen rather than weakened by scarcity in resources.

7.2 Financial voids and social apathy

According to what has emerged above, in order to function the political re-arrangement that developed in Catania had to rely on a strict control of both the local economy and the social composition of the city. The aim of this second and concluding section is therefore to deepen understanding of the economic and social consequences of such control and, ultimately, to establish any continuity and/or discontinuity with that exercised by the previous regime.

First, in respect of the city economy, it has been already pointed out that there was the lack of any change among the entrepreneurial and professional class to enable it to free itself from the discriminatory and politically orientated distribution of public resources[359]. Predictably, one of the core industrial sectors continued to be the publicly financed construction industry[360] which allowed again local politicians to carry on promising the much needed but never realised public works and at the same time to establish new pact with those entrepreneurial cartels that had filled the void left by the Cavalieri and around which the local mafia began to play a more central and leading role.

The model developed by the local *Cosa Nostra* boss, Nitto Santapaola, of not attacking the state head on but rather of relying on a system of reciprocal collusion with its local institutions, evolved, according to informants, into an even more tangible sharing of interests. This is also corroborated by some judicial proceedings[361] according to which the local clans became the primary economic subjects the council dealt with as they were able

[359] See Chapter 6 – Section 6.2.2

[360] As it will be examined in section 7.2.2, in those years, the city industrial production represented only the 17.4% of its economic market and it was still composed by the construction industry (6.2%) and the small and medium manufacturing companies orbiting the former.

[361] As reported by *La Repubblica*, following an anti-mafia operation nicknamed '*Dionisio'*, in continuity with the immediate post-crisis period, local prosecutors discovered the presence of an entrepreneurial cartel able to determine public tenders thanks to the ability of the local mafia clan to infiltrate the city public administration (*La Repubblica – Mafia, 83 ordinanze di custodia.Tra gli arrestati il boss La Rocca* 07/07/2005).

not only to obtain numerous public works put out to tender in those years, but also to decide which project should be undertaken and which companies got the contracts.

To better illustrate the cost of such a heavy political and criminal burden on the city economy, informants gave as an example the public debt of over €1bn accumulated by the centre-right government led by Umberto Scapagnini, Looking at judicial reports and media sources, it seems that after the brief Catania Spring, in fact, the council once again became a place of covert negotiations and the sharing out of public resources. Yet, as informants stated, while the city was no newcomer to these democratic shortcomings, during those years, new levels of political malpractice, economic stagnation and social decay were reached.

Accordingly, by the beginning of the new millennium, lack of employment was still creating a tear in the local social fabric with around 35% of the adult male population and 50% of the female population outside the labour market (ISTAT, 2015). With a pro capita income per family almost 50% less than the north/west regions of the country (Catania Chamber of commerce Report, 2008)[362], pockets of poverty increased with more people resorting to the black economy and tax evasion to make ends meet.

Predictably, these trends were even more evident among the most vulnerable social classes, often living in the many slums surrounding the city. With a welfare system organised around political interests, with many people without a job or adequate housing, with a lack of basic services and urban infrastructure, with a high rate of school drop-out among the young[363] and a higher number of people involved in criminal activities, these areas were described by informants as still deliberately abandoned by local authorities. As in the past, this scenario

[362] Accordingly, in the three years between 2004 and 2007 Catania and its province had a pro capita income per family of €16,286 against the €30,198 of the North-West regions and the €29,918 of the North-east regions. Besides, Catania scored less than many other province in Sicily (Messina €17,684 – Ragusa €17,980 – Siracusa €19, 825) (Ibid, 2008; 8).

[363] According to ISTAT (2015), during the first decade of the new millennium, the 30% of the local population between 18 and 24 years old had dropout school at 13 years of age and was not currently in any professional training course against the 18% of the national average (Ibid; 2).

allowed political patrons to make their clientelistic appeals and gave organised crime a free hand in governing these areas.

Yet, even the social and economic standards of the middle classes which had survived in the shadow of the local Dc deteriorated. While the chance of securing a stable job in exchange for political support was a real possibility until the early 1990s, under the new political regime the employment market became increasingly insecure. As already claimed, rather than affecting the clientelistic market this increased the leverage of patrons in that they could still obtain support over time by now offering just temporary employment.

However, notwithstanding this economic and social scenario, not to mention the administrative inefficiency of local government, informants stressed the absence within society of a collective organised response as if that '*block of critical thought*'(S3) present during the crisis of the early 1990s had never really been unlocked. While, on one side, the number of social associations and cooperatives increased, many remained under political control, and the few operating independently were described as isolated and unable to network with one another. As will be discussed later, informants indicated that socio-economic factors, cultural habits and social practices largely driven by personal rather than collective interests were the reasons behind the lack of an effective social response to the *status quo*.

7.2.1 A political controlled economy and its budgetary collateral effects

Given the exceptional political control over both the public and private economy of the city, this sub-section aims to understand the effects on Catania's economy the political re-organisation of the Second Republic triggered by examining the cause and consequences of

the budgetary deficit of over €1bn created by the centre-right administration led by Umberto Scapagnini between 2000 and 2008[364].

The political scenario in which the deficit was created originated from Bianco's premature resignation in 1999[365]. The following year new elections were held and won by the centre-right coalition on the first round with 56% of the vote. Within the coalition led by the Fi MEP, Umberto Scapagnini, however, informants P5 and M6 claimed that an important contribution was made by the centrist area of which Lombardo was the leading representative.

"*When Scapagnini was elected in 2000, the real power behind the throne was Lombardo who represented the centrist political area which despite a modest amount of seats in the city council*[366] *managed to determine the political direction and culture*" (P5).

"*Lombardo was formally the vice-mayor but in reality he was the co-mayor as he managed to win key departments, such as public works and the health system placing his own men and imposing his own line*" (M6).

More interestingly though, the exceptional power old by the vice-mayor was, according to informant M4, due to the fact that in contrast to Lombardo, Scapagnini was an outsider in that he lacked the personal network of local brokers the former had at his disposal.

"*Scapagnini did not have any contacts in the local territory, therefore, when Fi chose him as its candidate, it assigned him a local mentor, Giuseppe Firrarello, who, like Lombardo, was*

[364]As already claimed in section 7.1.1 , after being re-elected mayor of Catania in 2005 at the first round with 52% of votes against Bianco (45.7%), in 2008 Scapagnini resigned from the mayoral office to run as Fi MP for the general election of that year.

[365]In 1999 Bianco prematurely ended his mayoral mandate to became Interior Minister of the second D'Alema's government.

[366] Between the Ccd, Cdu and other two minor party the centrist political area obtained 9 seats against the 15 obtained by Fi and the 4 obtained by An.

an ex Dc with his own networks in Catania and its province. Yet, in the race between the two (Lombardo and Firrarello), Lombardo prevailed because of the strength of its centrist area" (M4).

Yet, as suggested by informant M5, Scapagnini in turn disposed of a direct connection with a central party, Fi, in those years often in power; this, as in the previous Dc regime, potentially meant a major access to state transfers.

"*Lombardo initially wanted to be the candidate for mayor on the basis of his electoral strength but then he granted the candidacy to Scapagnini because of his close relationship with Berlusconi. This closeness to a national leader of course meant the chance to easily receive public resources"*(M5).

In line with this point, when Berlusconi's second government was formed in 2002, Scapagnini was soon after nominated as special commissioner with unlimited access to €850m formally destined to safeguard the city from the high risk of an impending major earthquake[367]. In reality, however, a first part of those resources was invested in an electorally driven internal mobility within the council that involved thousands of public employees who, as pointed out by informant J3 and J2, still represented a vast reserve of votes.

"*In those years you had gardeners who suddenly became IT technicians, drivers who became member of the press office, and traffic officers who were promoted and taken off the city streets. Then you had salary upgrades and bonuses to public managers, notwithstanding their terrible administrative performance. It was a wide spread ranging distribution of benefits which cost money and gave nothing in exchange* (J3).

[367] Besides, the title of special commissioner meant the mayor could invest these resources without the agreement of the council and more importantly without the need to account for spending (*La Repubblica -- Catania, 850 milioni di euro sprecati per opere mai finite* 16/03/2009).

"As in the past internal mobility rather than being coordinated by staff planning of any sort was exclusively used to obtain the political support of those thousands of permanent and temporary employees that packed the public offices of the city" (J2).

Besides, this high level of internal mobility was paralleled by an increasing number of unnecessarily outsourced services and external consultancies which were described by informant E8 as yet not only another politically oriented distribution of benefits but also as a new way of extracting illicit funds.

"*External consultancies have taken the place of the old bribes system. Rather than paying me a bribe I outsource a service to you and you give me part of your profit. Therefore, although the council has its own internal personnel, since 2000, there has been a boom in economic, financial, urban, healthcare and waste disposal consultancies or any type of external consultancy you care to imagine. This, apart from the amount of money wasted, has brought many local politicians huge electoral support*" (E8).

Besides, both informant M5 and A3 highlighted the effect this intense outsourcing had on the local economic market

"*External consultancies mean that a bigger and bigger part of the private economy and professional class is under the discretionary power of political actors who rather than offering a permanent job give you a temporary one so that you have to remain loyal to them*" (M5).

"*Most of the local economy has remained dependent on public resources. And this means not just the mere public employment but also the tertiary sector, for example, composed of organisations or single individuals whose activities are strictly governed by the public administration or to all those entrepreneurial activities that exclusively live off public*

contracts. With this comes the need to have a special relationship with those who govern those resources: that is the politicians who, therefore, have a great power" (A3).

A similar arrangement, along with its budgetary consequences, existed in the many municipal companies[368] contracting basic services such as water and gas supply, public transport and waste collection, which by the end of the centre-right administration were mostly bankrupted. Although these companies were formally private in nature, in reality they were transformed into an extension of the public sector and therefore exploited for a large variety of clientelistic purposes. As again informant M5 explained, in fact,

"*those companies were first used to place clients, either as managers and/ or as simply temporary employees, then further [used] to subcontract part of their services to other companies so to favour other clients. Finally, in order to win the support of these many clients living in social housing, the council didn't ask to them to pay any bills but nor did it pay the provider companies with the result that the former built up an enormous debt and the latter ended up bankrupted*" (M5).

This last point was also addressed by informant M4 who claimed that:

"*in this city we had the only gas company in the world that went bankrupt and the same goes for the others. We had entire districts that didn't pay either a water bill or an electricity or gas one; many dwellings were and still are illegally connected to those services and the local authorities knew that perfectly well. Yet when election time comes it all makes sense*" (M4).

By applying the old spending criteria designed essentially around electoral rather than socio-economic goals, this system apart from discouraging any programmatic policy and/or

[368]As reported by *LiveSicilia* Scapagnini six public administrators were put under investigation for having unregularly paid remunerations to managers and consultants of two municipal companies. In 2013, however, all the defendants were acquitted.

long-term economic planning, it was in constant need for ever greater resources. Accordingly, in order to obtain extra funds, both the local council and its municipal companies took out a great number of mortgages, often without financial backing, which amounted within a few years to a debt of over €800m in addition to €41m of off-balance sheet liabilities and €95m of outstanding payments[369].

As argued by informant M4, being the expenditures largely overcoming the revenues, in order to last the local administration began to hide its financial troubles.

"*When a public administration, or even a private business for that matter, spends much more than it is bring in, sooner or later things won't add up. Hence, in order to carry on with that system you need to falsify the numbers, and this is what happened here. It was no coincidence that, when the debt could no longer be hidden, dozens and dozens of local administrators, including the Mayor, were involved in judicial proceedings for false accounting*" (M4).

As a ministerial investigation revealed, in fact, since at least 2003 the local government had systematically violated accounting practices and laws by placing hundreds of millions of euros of lost revenues in the annual budgets. As a result, the mayor, along with seventeen of his councillors, were investigated for false accounting and in 2011 convicted to two years and nine months imprisonment which was upheld on appeal[370].

7.2.2 Politics, economy and the mafia

Apart from the senseless spending criteria adopted by the city council and its unlawful attempts to solve the problems arising from this, judicial investigations also revealed the

[369] According to two ministerial inspectors sent by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, many of these mortgages were obtained in an anomalous way and constantly violating norms and accounting policies (*La Stampa – Disastro Catania 40 indagati* 21/07/2008). See also *IlSole24Ore – Crack di Catania, 47 avvisi di garanzia, coinvolto anche Umberto Scapagnini* 12/10/2008.

[370] See *La Repubblica – Catania, bilanci del Comune "truccati" condannati Scapagnini e due giunte* 10/10/2010 and *Sicilianews – Condannati 17 ex assessori (Giunta Scapagnini)* 25/05/2013.

conflict of interest the city's political power had again created around the public work sector supporting a new monopolistic cartel of entrepreneurs within which the local mafia gained a leading role. A consistent part of those €850m received by Scapagnini to safeguard the city's major infrastructure against the high risk of an imminent earthquake were in fact also diverted to public works that had very little to do with any anti-seismic planning. Rather than safeguarding the structure of those strategic buildings such as hospitals, schools, police and fire stations, in fact, tens of millions of Euros were allocated to build 22 cars parks only five of which were completed and inaugurated and then abandoned[371] (*La Repubblica*, 15/10/2008). In this respect, informant A2 described these building speculations as the main platform where the political and economic elites of the city could meet and draw up a new pact of reciprocal solidarity.

"*Those car parks, supposedly built to ease city congestion, were in reality a classic building speculation that favoured the contractors, a long line of professional figures and also landowners who saw the value of their land exponentially increase. There was no traffic plan behind it, the choice on where to build them was guided rather by political purposes as all these actors involved can bring in a lot of political support*" (A2).

Moreover, in those years, the local administration financed a series of projects, this time, as stressed by informant M4, in favour of companies closely associated with local mafia clans.

"*During Scapagnini's administration the mafia not only obtained, without tendering, numerous contracts directly from the council but, as emerged from some judicial proceedings, Enzo Mangion, a local mafia boss from the Santapaola family, basically acted*

[371] See *La Repubblica -- Catania, 850 milioni di euro sprecati per opere mai finite* 16/03/2009.

as a local minister for public works in that he could decide which project should be carried out, which company should get the contract, which one shouldn't and so on" (M4).

To corroborate these claims, in 2010, a vast anti-mafia investigation nicknamed Iblis (the Islamic equivalent of Satan) uncovered the close links that numerous local entrepreneurs had sought and established with *Cosa Nostra* in Catania and its province and also the 'perverse collusion' the local political power had built with some local bosses[372]. Although neither the mayor of Catania nor his government was involved in these proceedings, 48 people were investigated[373], among them local politicians, entrepreneurs and mafia members, including Scapagnini's former co-mayor and political ally, Raffaele Lombardo, by that time President of the region.

In this respect, informants provided a further insight into the very nature of these pacts[374] between the political, economic and criminal power of the city by revealing who gets what and how. Accordingly, Informant E7 pointed out the political interests orbiting around such pacts.

"*Political power intentionally searches for the electoral support that a mafia syndicate or a group of entrepreneurs can provide especially in a system with two major coalitions, such as existed in those years. Being able to move even five-ten thousand votes to one or the other political coalition in fact means directly determining electoral results*" (E7).

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[372] See *La Repubblica – Iblis, 24 condanne per boss e politici assolto il deputato regionale Cristaudo* 22/09/2012 and *Meridio News – Iblis, in cassazione il patto tra mafia e colletti bianchi. Storia dei quasi 3000 giorni dell'inchiesta del diavolo* 18/04/2018.

[373] Besides, prosecutors seize properties and good for a value of €400m (*SosImpresa* Report, 2012).

[374] Angelo Siino, a former mafia member who turned prosecution witness by the early 1990, described these pacts as a table with three legs where each leg represents a different actor that all together give shape to what Ruggiero (2011 quoted in Gounev and Ruggiero, 2012) defines 'criminal networks'. These "see the participation of diverse collective or individual entities each pursing their own goals in a style and against a set of values that are consistent with their own specific cultural, ethnic and professional background. As collective actors, participants display a form of *organised behaviour* without showing signs of an *organised identity*" (Ibid; 12).

Alternatively, informant S4 explained what benefits local criminal syndicates obtain:

"*in this city even the street vendor who sells parsley at the fish market pays protection taxes to the mafia. This means that the racketeering system is not only a mere economic question, it is also a question of control over a territory. This in turn means control over people's destiny and their electoral behaviour and with this the ability to control public investments thanks to the collusion with political power*" (S4).

In an additional comment, this latter informant also explained what advantage many economic actors gain from political and criminal power:

"*however, whereas many entrepreneurs are victims of both the corruption of politicians and the imposition of the mafia, many others, including the majority of the professional firms in this city, pay protection taxes and bribes not because of the fear of being killed, but because it is good business, as by paying it you acquire a series of services and guarantees for your business that otherwise you would not have.*" (S4).

Ultimately, a concluding set of informants' accounts concerned the impact such strict political and criminal control has on the economic composition of the city. Accordingly, as reported by a socioeconomic analysis run by the European Parliament[375]most of Catania economic activities remained centred both on services provided by public authorities and/or by assisted private companies[376] (and therefore subject to the discretional power of the political elite) and on a particular large trade sector which along with the construction industry was described as strictly controlled by the local mafia.

[375] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/540372/IPOL_IDA(2015)540372_IT.pdf

[376]Moreover, according to the local Chamber of Commerce report (2007) in Catania and its province there were 87.140 small and medium companies mainly operating in traditional sectors such as trade (36%) agriculture (21.2)%, construction industry (11.4%), manufacturing (18.4%).

Beyond the increasing infiltration of the public work sector, in fact, organised crime in Catania developed an extended and increasingly varied racketeering system under which around 80% of all economic activities in the city and its surroundings were placed. The variety of such a system was dispelled by informant M2 who argued that:

"*in contrast to the past when the clans merely requested money, today protection taxes come also by imposing on a shop a certain group of items or by imposing on a company the recruitment of a number of people or the outsourcing of certain services etc.*" (M2).

In addition, a further and equally detrimental form of control over the economy exercised by the mafia was suggested by informant E7:

"*in addition to the protection taxes you have to consider the vast system of usury the mafia has built up in the last decades, thanks also to the economic crises of the last years when the banks don't lend any money. This system doesn't just involve the small and medium entrepreneurs but also the myriad of those family men without permanent occupations who, having no salary but a mortgage to pay, resort to borrowing money from the clans at an incredible interest rate. This means that entire social groups are trapped in a dead end*" (E7)[377].

However, alongside these predatory and parasitic activities (Sciarrone, 2014), as informant S4 claimed, the mafia became a symbiotic economic actor able to corrupt and conquer key economic sectors.

[377]According to *SOS Impresa* Report (2012) in Catania the usury system in those years was widespread and involved large strata of the city population. As it emerged from a judicial investigation in 2010 the mafia acted as a sort of building society also thanks to the support of white collar actors operating in the bank and financial system. More often than not, the victims being unable to pay back sold their property or companies to the clans which acquired larger and larger slices of the local market (Ibid; 42).

"*After all, the mafia is mainly a service provider; thus, in a city with a strong commercial vocation, such as Catania, it is not only a criminal entity but it also becomes an entrepreneurial one that corrupts vast parts of the economic fabric of the city. A vast amount of money that the mafia extracts from its illicit activities is also regularly re-invested in the legitimate market with the result that numerous sectors are literally monopolised by it*" (S4).

Besides, informant A2 claimed that, together with the political power, the mafia has equally determine in its favour the composition of the local economy:

"*Today like yesterday, the economic model developed by organised crime in this city is based on the stratification and repetition of the same mechanisms; hence the model is unable to re-invent itself. It is all about the control of territory and along with that its economic market which is constantly altered and limited to those sectors the mafia can easily control; logistics, supermarkets, shopping centres*[378] *and of course the construction industry*" (A2).

Ultimately, as stressed by informant M4, in continuity with the old regime the closeness to either the political power or the criminal one overcame the principles of meritocracy and fair competition that should regulate a free market.

"*As in the past, the entrepreneur who wants to work here is destined to fail without connexions to either a politician or a criminal actor or both. In this city the economy has been strategically developed only in those sectors where this control is possible. There is not a single entrepreneur who invests his own money, it is all about intercepting the flow of public funds managed by political power and establishing the right alliances with those cartels often governed by the mafia*" (M4).

[378] For an extensive and exhaustive examination of the relationships between local politicians, entrepreneurs and mafia clans around the development of shopping centre see Arcidiacono and Avola in Sciarrone (2011).

As previously claimed among the different dimensions of quality of democracy, "the rule of law is the base upon which every other dimension of democratic quality rests" (Diamond and Morlino, 2004; 23)[379]. Besides, as Morlino (2010) argues, along with the presence of an independent, fair, efficient judicial system a main condition for the rule of law to function is that "no area is dominated by organised crime even at a local level; that is, the legal state is supreme and there is no corruption in the political, administrative and judicial branches" (Ibid: 219). Given that, notwithstanding the major electoral and institutional transformations and despite the local anti-corruption campaign, the return of endemic corruption and the increased power hold by organised crime over the city economy and society leaves little doubts on the outcomes of the crisis of the early 1990s.

Yet, the new did particularly resembled the old not only for lack of turnover in both the political and economic class of the city but also, as it will be explore in the next section, for the inability or unwillingness of society to collectively challenge the consequences such a system brings. Then again, in fact, it would be illusory to believe there was a clear demarcation between a corrupted and colluded political system and a candid civil society. Clientelism and corruption become again systematic because many became again to benefit from it and many more remained silent.

7.2.3 Society and its inability to react

The return of clientelistic politics, endemic corruption and collusion with the criminal powers in the city, inevitably had a number of repercussions, first, on the quality of life of the local population. The financial meltdown of both the council and several of its municipal

[379] Accordingly, the rule of law not only ensures horizontal accountability by scrutinising the legality of official actions, but, with that, it acts as a guarantor for political and civil rights, vertical accountability and responsiveness (see chapter 1, subsection 1.1.3).

companies, predictably led to an administrative gridlock and therefore to the suspension of numerous public services leading the city to become, once more, a national issue[380]. According to the annual ranking carried out by the national daily business newspaper, *Il Sole 24 ore,* on the quality of life in hundreds of Italian cities, between 2000 and 2010 Catania gradually dropped furtherly among the worst cities in all the country[381]. Besides, especially in regards to the pre and post default period (2006 – 2009) the city, with an average position of 100 out of 103, still suffered from lack of employment and a scarce entrepreneurial competition (average 89/103) to which it corresponded poor levels of wealth, savings and household consumption (99.7/103). Moreover, infrastructure and services remained inadequate and mostly inefficient (91/103) as well as the city's health and judicial systems (89). Ultimately, Catania continued to be a dangerous city with people having less and less trust in the justice system and an increasing number of petty crimes often committed by minors[382].

This desolate condition in which the city lay was commented by informant S1 in the following terms:

"*Despite at least four or five generations of politicians have been promising a socio-economic revival of the city, this latter have an infrastructural deficit that goes back to the 60s and 70s. There are neither railways nor appropriate motorways, the port is still*

[380] See *La Repubblica – Catania il tracollo di una città* 21/10/2008, *Il Corriere della Sera – Vigili a piedi e vie al buio Catania sull'orlo del crac* 20/09/2008, *La Repubblica – Catania, spazzini senza stipendi in strada rifiuti e guerriglia* 19/09/2008, *La Stampa – Catania in bancarotta; Sessanta indagato per un crac senza precedent* 28/09/2008.

[381] Accordingly, while in 2000 the city was at the 93th position out of 103 cities in 2006, the year after Scapagnini was re-elected mayor, it had dropped to the 103th position out of 103 cities. Besides, the average position during Scapagnini's administration (2000-2008) was of 98 out of 103.

[382] This discouraging picture was corroborated by the Catania Chamber of Commerce Report (2008) which described the city as still socio-economically underdevelopment having a local market unable to attract external investment, composed mostly of poorly productive sectors to which it corresponds a low levels of academic achievement, widespread unemployment and a per capita GDP among the local population which was a third of the national average.

separated from the city and it does not have a tourist area, the so-called industrial district is abandoned with no electric lighting and when it rains it gets flooded. You have crumbling schools, police and fire stations, the city courthouse is at risk of partial collapse but then you have mayors who open a hundred meters of cycle lane or a fountain in the city centre on three or four occasions with a big picture on the front page of the local newspaper" (S1).

By contrast, however, as stressed by both informants' accounts and media sources, it seems that notwithstanding these discouraging results, it was hard to find any form of social reaction during those years that could have fought back, scrutinised or made the administrative powers accountable for the growing decline of the city. This form of social inertia was plainly expressed by a local reader of the daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, in 2008. "Those entire districts left with no lighting are the metaphor of the decline of the last decade; an urban decline, a socio-economic decline and especially a moral decline. For weeks the rubbish has covered the pavements, yet there is no civic outcry. The city roads look like they have been bombed, but people's attention is exclusively on avoiding the potholes. A city governed by widespread lawlessness, by corruption, by the law of the strongest, of the smartest, where the norm is to go around with no helmet, not to pay for tickets on the bus, to park the car wherever you like"[383].

This directly proportional correlation between the city's decline and the almost apathetic attitude of its population was explained by informant A3 in the following terms:

"*The lack of interest by people is ingrained. If in order to obtain a service, such as, for example, a CAT-scan, a person is forced to look for a friend or a friend of friend to receive a favour rather than a right, this person will sooner or later lose any interest in the common good and instead will focus exclusively on his own interests. This cultural and social attitude*

[383] *La Repubblica – Catania, il tracollo di una citta'* 21/10/2008

is the direct result of an essentially clientelistic political system in which the relationship between who governs and who is governed remains asymmetrical and vertical, a society incapable of organising any form of collective request and/or protest" (A3).

Similarly, informant M3 spoke of cultural attitudes and subsequent social behaviours that are also determined by the one expressed by the dominant elites of the city.

"*I reckon it is a question of cultural habits that lead to certain social actions. People believe or are led to believe that such a political system that bestows favours when it should ensure rights is convenient and, therefore, not having any available alternative, they accept it, support it and fall into line with it, notwithstanding the utter decline of the city. When the norm in this city is represented by the constant violation of any basic rule both at the micro and macro level, the lay person doesn't have anything to lose so he/she believes that's the way and consequently adapts*" (M3).

Ultimately, as stressed by informant M2, these cultural habits and social action could be found not only among the most fragile social classes but also and crucially among the more privileged ones.

"*Among those who supported the centre-right administration in those years, we cannot include just the under-privileged, often illiterate or semi-illiterate, classes but also and more significantly, those well-educated people who participating in that system accepted the degeneration of the city for the sake of their own interests. It is a sort of generalised selfishness, a widespread individualism created by the political class that generation after generation has shaped people's social behaviour and become the rule*" (M2).

As might be expected, when the more privileged and well-educated social classes conform rather than question the status quo, even less should be expected from those less

wealthy and well educated members of society. As claimed in both chapters 5 and 6, in the many slums surrounding the city and disconnected from its social and economic activities, not only has clientelistic appeal been more effective but organised crime has found fertile soil in which to grow[384]. With reference to this, informant S3 argued that , in line with the old regime, the local administration continued to indirectly delegate the government of those areas to the local mafia only to reappear at the time political elections were imminent.

"*In a district such as San Cristoforo or Librino people have an absolute mistrust of others; they live life separated one from another, nobody talks as everyone is scared to; there is no sense of community and people are unable to do anything together. This social climate is ideal for the mafia to infiltrate and control these areas. Besides, social decay, poverty, widespread unemployment and the high level of ill health that those people have suffered generation after generation, which should spark a reaction from them, makes them powerless. They are often unable to read and write and therefore they cannot sort out their problems with the local institutions which, of course, take advantage of this situation to obtain electoral support*" (S3).

Of the same view was informant S1 who described life in Catania's poorer districts in the following terms:

"*in the slums there are kids who, while appearing on the register, don't exist as citizens. They don't go to school, their families are often unable to provide for them, they don't have a playground or football pitch where they can play and live in an environment where the*

[384]Accordingly, as stated in *La Repubblica's* article above mentioned: "In many suburbs organised crime is the real employer, the one which offers an escape from poverty. The only sign left of the state are the schools, deprived of support and funds. Political elections are run like [those] in a third world country, prayer cards handed out by kids in front of polling stations, and shopping bags full of pasta…" (*La Repubblica – Catania il tracollo di una citta'* 28/10/2008).

choice is between being exploited or being a criminal. Their parents are barely educated and grew up with violence that they in turn pass on to their children. Most of the people do not have any stable job; therefore, they need to make ends meet each day, accepting daily and underpaid jobs, in the best case scenario, that is when they don't turn to criminal activities. Thus, it is not surprising that you can buy these people's votes for €50 or €100. Whoever promises the chance of a change, whether it is a politician or a mafia boos, he will always obtain their unquestioning support" (S1).

A final remark on this topic was made by informant S2 who claimed that the mafia fills in the voids left by the state when this latter fails to equally provides social services and rights.

"*Given the lack of any official government in those slums, services are provided by the mafia that become a sort of alternative welfare system and, therefore, with no resistance whatsoever [the mafia] manages to get control over entire parts of the city. Naturally, those who pay the most in such a social context are the youngsters who are easy to lure and to recruit for illicit activities*" (S2).

Ultimately, as claimed by those informants operating in the social sector, whereas in the last two decades there has been a growth in the numbers of associations and social cooperatives[385], most remains under the control of political powers and those who attempt to acquire independency from it were and still are a minority and were and continue to be frequently obstructed. Accordingly, informants S2 and S3 argued that:

"*the 80% of this sector is composed of associations under the direct or indirect control of a political leader; they apparently operate in the social sector but in reality act as electoral*

[385] As stated by the regional government, in Catania and its surroundings in fact there are 159 social cooperatives, 17 associations promoting social development and 17 between religious charities and non-profit organisations.

offices. The remaining part consists of a minority of associations and social cooperatives that struggle every day to continue operating in the territory. Our cooperative, for instance, having always refused to take sides in favour of this or that politician, has been hampered in so many ways. The funds we are entitled to receive always arrive after months, if not years, of delay, something that creates endless problems for our cooperative" (S2).

"*Most of the social or cultural associations and cooperatives operating in Catania are electoral apparatuses and as such they receive the vast majority of resources. Some of them even appear to be anti-mafia associations when in reality are an integral part of that system which favours rather than fights the mafia. Although the collaboration between an association such as ours and a local administration would not be a negative thing per se, in a context such as Catania it means collusion with a political class exclusively directed towards accumulating power rather than serving the community*" (S3).

Yet, a final point was addressed by informant E7 in regard to the inability of this minor group of associations to network between each other in order to increase their strength:

"*in terms of anti-racketeering associations, in order to collaborate you have to share the same principles and plan of action. Although some of them are run by honest guys, their activities are limited to symbolic actions. To fight such a pervasive racketeering system it is not enough to paint a mural or to promote the consumption of products made on confiscated estates or to organise seminars and conventions. You need first of all to stand side by side with those entrepreneurs who are victims of such a system, trying to convince them to report this extortion. In Catania and its province out of thousands of businesses we have three or four reports per year, so contrary to what many anti-racketeering associations say the problem is not solved whatsoever*" (E7).

This disparity of aims and lack of coordinated action was also reported by other informants operating in the social sector who often accused each other of either being ineffective and too self-aggrandizing or, even worse, of having sold out to political power, which inevitably acquires a negative connotation given the way this power has been exercised in the city. It follows that this poor ability to create collaborative networks inevitably weakens an already weak capacity to organise collective responses that could have counter balanced the decline of the city examined in this chapter. On the contrary, Catania appeared to maintain that block of critical thought it had demonstrated both during the old Dc regime and then during its crisis, notwithstanding the numerous windows of opportunity that the resulting momentum had provided. The return of clientelistic politics, after the brief interlude epitomised by the Catania Spring, met no obstacles among an electorate in search of continuity rather than change. In a similar fashion, both the entrepreneurial and professional classes welcomed the reappearance of a corrupt market and its exchanges, along with the role played by the local mafia in that market. Whereas the quality of life in the city reached one of its lowest levels, people, whether from the lower or higher social classes, remained attached to those cultural habits and social behaviours driven by personal and particularistic interests at the expense of society as a whole.

7.3 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the period following that post-crisis adjustment analysed in chapter 6, in order to understand what shape the so-called Italian Second Republic took in the city of Catania and ultimately to establish the degree of similarity with and/or difference from the old regime, not only in strict political terms but also in economic and social ones. In this respect, from informants' accounts and from media and judicial sources it has clearly emerged that there is a significant level of continuity with the past that made the crisis of the early 1990s an evolutionary rather than a transformative one.

Accordingly, the re-organisation of the political arena, epitomised by the return of the parties after a brief interlude of a-political administrations, meant, above all, the return of the same unequal distribution of particularistic benefits previously exercised by the old party system. Yet, in contrast to the past, the clientelistic market was now organised around political leaders who, gaining control of public offices, managed to bypass the, by then, weak parties' apparatus and to build clusters of clients through their own personal networks. The former President of the Region, Raffaele Lombardo and his system of concentric circles of political patronage was examined as a typical but not isolated case study.

Besides, notwithstanding the degree of change triggered by the electoral reforms of the early 1990s, in the Sicilian city a post-Dc political re-grouping re-emerged and it was composed of those centrist parties that, while achieving poor results at national level, managed to acquire extraordinary electoral leverage, at local level, within the centre-right coalition and so was able to resist and break up the new bi-polar criteria implemented by the reforms. While the fragmentation of the new party system didn't compromise the stability of local government it had a negative effect on its efficiency and accountability. Each party within the coalition acted in a similar fashion to the old Dc factions during the 1980s; that is warfare over the distribution of public resources needed to fuel their own clientelistic channels at the expense of any coordinated and rational use of such resources.

This new political re-organisation was described by some informants as a natural evolution within an electorate still economically subjugated and therefore culturally and socially accustomed to the clientelistic distribution of individual benefits. The centre-right coalition and its undisputed leader, Silvio Berlusconi, had to rely on local patrons, mostly ex-Dc bosses, in order to have a chance to get a foothold in the local territory and compete with the post-Dc centrist parties. In a sort of vicious circle, the organisation of national parties at local level coincided with the clientelistic networks of political leaders as it had to adapt to

and was reinforced by an electorate incapable of mobilising around motivational or ideological appeals, having, in turn, been shaped by decades of systematic patronage.

Unsurprisingly, such a political re-arrangement had a negative impact on the already fragile city economy. As shown in chapter 5 with regard to the local Dc regime, in order to function, the new clientelistic system had to maintain not just social groups but also the economic classes reliant on those public resources it managed by directly or indirectly impeding the development of independent economic activities. In line with the past, although the much needed economic growth was at the centre of any electoral propaganda, the political class deliberately divided and invested resources where it was electorally rather than economically viable at the expense of any long-term, coordinated planning that could have rescued the city from its poor infrastructure and lack of industrial production. Accordingly, the public and publically assisted private sectors remained the major sources of employment, representing almost 80% of the city's economy, and what was left was a trade sector, largely dominated and controlled by the racketeering system, and some industrial activities essentially focused around the construction industry, within which new cartels were formed and directed by an increasingly entrepreneurial mafia.

To better illustrate the effects of such strict public control over the economic market, this chapter has examined the financial disaster triggered by the centre-right administration and its mayor, Umberto Scapagnini, during the years under analysis; a financial deficit of over €1bn that affected not only the local council but also that large section of the economy dependent on its resource. This has been described by informants as the end of the so-called Catania Spring, and Scapagnini, thanks to his closeness to the Berlusconi's government, was given unrestricted power over a vast amount of resources that he and his government systematically squandered for electoral interests. By allowing unrestricted internal mobility and outsourcing of services, the local council not only damaged its own finances but also

those of many municipal companies associated with it and used as another medium of exchange with an endless variety of clients.

Yet, as is often the case, in order to maintain and feed such a widespread distribution of resources, the local administration resorted to corrupt practices that ranged from the systematic violation of accounting practices, in order to hide the financial deficit it was creating, to the diversion of public resources to an uncoordinated series of public works and building speculations in favour of a restricted circle of entrepreneurs who, in turn, would provide electoral support. A similar system of private exchange sustained by public resources also involved companies run by local Mafia clans that not only managed to obtain numerous contracts directly from the city council but, more significantly, as a series of investigations later discovered, it also acted as a local Ministry of Public Works deciding which projects should be put out to tender and organising the distribution of contracts between companies. As some informants pointed out, that model of not attacking the state head, which had been invented in the 1980s by the historic boss Nitto Santapaola, had by the beginning of the new millennium been further perfected, once again forming a circle of reciprocity and solidarity between political power, the economic classes and the criminal organisations of the city.

Consequently, in addition to the control the local administration exercised over the local economic market should be added that imposed by the mafia which, outside the public work sector, maintained its grip on the remaining entrepreneurial and commercial activities through a pervasive and varied system of racketeering and usury. Accordingly, informants spoke about the mafia as a major economic force that was capable of imposing its own economic model based on the development of those sectors it could easily control at the expense of alternative and innovative one.

However, as Pasquino (2000) claims with regard to the Clean Hands investigations of the early 1990s and as the last section of this chapter has shown, it would be naïve to think

there was a clear distinction between the corruption of those who governed and the innocence of those who were governed. On the contrary it has emerged that, notwithstanding the detrimental effects that such a political, economic and criminal system had on the standard of living of the city, there was no effective organised social reaction. Both the more privileged and better off classes and the less privileged, maintained not just a passive acceptance but in many cases actively colluded either with the political powers or the criminal organisations. As suggested by some informants, in fact, most people in Catania were motivated by a range of cultural habits which in turn informed and were informed by social practices in harmony rather than in contrast with the way rights were converted into favours handed out by the political class. Whether it was a medical check-up or the prospect of a job, people lacked alternatives and have shown a predisposition for individual benefits that made it impossible for them to fight against the status quo.

Chapter 8

Discussion and Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

This research was aimed at examining the crisis of the Italian First Republic in the city of Catania, in Sicily. Despite the fact that there have been many national-scale analyses of these events, there has still been no attempt to explore them from a local perspective. Besides, while the crisis could be observed from specific 'vantage points' (Ginsborg, 2001), such as Milan and it's anti-corruption campaign, Palermo and its "desperate fight against the mafia" (Ibid; 250) and the Bank of Italy in Rome and its attempt to solve the country's economic troubles, here the aim was to assess what insights a rather peripheral urban context[386] could provide into the causes, development and consequences of such events.

With this in mind an analytical matrix was designed following the 'before-during-after the crisis scheme' proposed by Bull and Newell (2005) and focusing on the city's political, economic and social spheres. Accordingly, the scope was to first establish the quality of democracy in the Sicilian city during the First Republic; second to identify those anomalies that triggered its crisis, those actors and institutions that analysed what went wrong, those that called for change and those that resisted such change. Third, to determine levels of continuity and/or discontinuity between the pre and post-crisis period by assessing the quality of democracy of the new regime.

This concluding chapter is divided in two sections; section 8.1 provides, first, some final answers to the research questions by assessing whether or not the crisis triggered a process of

[386] As stated in chapter 1, Catania is peripheral both in respect to the crisis under analysis and to the north/south divide. Accordingly, it was necessary to establish whether or not the unsolved socio-economic disparity between the northern and southern regions of the country contributed to determining the nature of the crisis of the early 1990s.

transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics and with that increased the quality of democracy in Catania. Second, given the centrality that clientelistic politics played in the development, course and outcome of the crisis in the Sicilian city, the section will also discuss how the findings provided new accounts on such type of governance, its undesirable consequences for the quality of a given democratic system, its ability to determine in its favour the outcome of political and socio-economic transformations, to promote a 'culture of impunity' and to favour the spread of corruption. Finally section 8.2 will briefly focus on the research limitations by providing at the same time suggestions for future investigations into some of the implications emerged during the research.

8.1 Discussion and implications

8.1.1 The transition that never was: continuities and discontinuities and the quality of democracy.

As discussed in chapter 1, by interpreting the Italian crisis as a potential case of transition from a consensual democratic model towards a competitive one, authors (Pasquino, 2000; Bicchieri et al 2005; Fabbrini, 2006-2009; Morlino, 2009) have warned of the absence of any theoretical background within which to frame it. Similarly, in empirical terms, while authors (Bull and Newell, 1996; Bull and Rhode, 1997; Fabbrini, 2000) have attempted to compare such transition with the one between the Fourth and Fifth French Republic (1958-1962) others (Pasquino, 2000; Morlino, 2009: Bull, 2012) have stressed that while in France the transition was institutionalised by substantial constitutional changes this was not the case in Italy[387].

However, if the focus goes from the central to the local level, the French case may still be a relevant term of comparison. As discussed in chapter 6 (section 6.2) in those years

[387] The lack of constitutional change has led, in fact, some authors (Fabbrini, 2000; Bull and Newell; 2009; Bull, 2012; Silveri, 2015) to question the notion of 'transition' between the First and Second Italian Republic

the transition towards a more competitive model was institutionalised by a set of reforms regarding the local governments that not only introduced a more majoritarian electoral system, but profoundly modified the institutional relationship between the executive power and the council so to ensure governmental stability and facilitate the policy-making processes (Trigilia, 2005).

However, given that the Italian consensual model in Catania was essentially clientelistic, the research aimed at establishing if to the transition from consensual to competitive democracy corresponded in the Sicilian city the one from clientelistic to programmatic politics and with that an increase in the quality of democracy of the local government.

Accordingly, during the First Republic, the local mass clientelistic parties openly violated the dimensions of quality of democracy examined in chapter 1. The multi-layered and unequal distribution of particularistic benefits directly affected the principle of equality, the informal and covert nature of clientelistic exchanges and negotiations between patrons impeded the exercise of vertical accountability that is the control over policies and policy-makers (Diamand and Morlino (2004). Moreover, especially but not exclusively during the 1980s, the warfare between parties and factions for the control of public offices and resources produced an exceptional governmental instability and with that undermined the level of responsiveness. Simultaneously, the increasing number of clients and the contraction in state transfer due to the international economic crisis of the mid-1970s forced many to resort to corruption practices which involved not only the political and economic class of the city but also its judicial one, weakening the rule of law and with that the horizontal accountability of the system.

By the beginning of the 1990s such shortcomings were directly challenged by both the local anti-corruption campaign and the reforms of the local governments. As discussed in chapter 6, by allowing voters to directly elect their mayors, the reforms aimed at increasing

the level of vertical accountability; similarly, by providing a more majoritarian electoral organisation and by increasing the power of the executive, the aim was to improve the transparency and stability of local governments and with that their level of vertical and horizontal accountability, and responsiveness[388]. Such formal reorganisation, it was believed and hope, would have completed the transition from the consensual model of the First Republic towards a more competitive and efficient one, that in Catania should had taken the form of one from clientelistic to programmatic politics.

These hopes and beliefs were initially conforted by Bianco's administration during the so-called 'Catania Spring. As discussed in chapter 6, the first directly mayor, in fact, not only managed to provide stability to the local government, notwithstanding the lack of majority in the council and a limited electoral support, but also to increase the transparency and efficiency of official actions improving the level of accountability and responsiveness. The programmatic nature of the new local government, was reflected in both the restoration of those basic service the previous administrations failed to provide, in the increased efficiency of the local public offices, in the recovery of some areas of the historical centre, and, perhaps more significantly in the development of those a virtuous set of networks with the local University and the electronics district that gave way to the so-called Etna Valley.

Yet, if in those years, the transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics seemed to have been completed, the lack of turnover in both the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial class of the city impeded a diffuse economic development and prepared the set for the return of the parties and with that of clientelistic politics.

[388] As already discussed, the reforms opted for a stronger executive power so to bypass the particularistic interests of political parties, and facilitate the policy-making process, make it more visible and therefore accountable and respond more effectively to the needs of the communities (Trigilia, 2005).

Yet, unlike the previous system in which clientelism was governed by and through the parties' apparatuses, the new one was organised around leaders, mostly ex-Dc patrons, who exercised direct or indirect control over electoral offices[389].

These organisational innovations, however, were not so much a change but rather a development of the old democratic paradigm into a new political and institutional organisation. In a similar way to what had occurred during 1960s, when the 'professional politicians' exploited the emerging mass parties to expand the clientelistic system of the old notables[390], the new patrons exploited the power given to the electoral offices to rearrange it around their personal network of brokers. With an economic and occupational market still largely relying on public funds and an electoral body still in search of a clientelistic distribution of such funds, the re-organisation of the political system in the long run could only be handed to '*those political figures that were the only ones able to attack and mobilise that kind of electorate*" (M9).

The crisis of the early 1990s, therefore, was a crisis of the mass clientelistic parties but not of clientelistic politics per se. Contrary to the aims of the reforms of local government, it was not the party's apparatus that made clientelism so widespread but rather the ability to govern the city's fragilities in order to strengthen the power held by the political elites.

Unsurprisingly the lack of transition from a clientelistic to a programmatic appeal jeopardised the possibility of improving the quality of democracy in the city. The return of clientelistic appeals, in fact, was reflected in the exceptional level of party fragmentation within the governing coalitions. Despite the new institutional profile of local governments provided more administrative stability and power alternation between competing coalitions,

[389] In this regard, in chapter 6 (subsection 6.1.2) it was stressed that these new leaders gave birth to leader-centred micro-clientelistic parties (Calise, 2000; 65-66) whose apparatuses corresponded with their personal networks.

[390] As stressed in chapter 6, in fact, Caciagli (1977) describes this passage as a 'fake modernization'.

the system remained shaped by proportional and consensual criteria. This, apart from hindered a coordinated administrative action and therefore lower the level of responsiveness, increased the veto power hold by parties, encouraged covert negotiations between patrons in the decision-making process at the expense of political accountability and, as in the past, favoured the return of endemic corruption undermining again both the rule of law and the horizontal accountability of the system.

In economic terms, this once again favoured a diffuse but un-programmed flow of public investments that discouraged the modernization of the city's economic market in favour of the public and publically assisted sectors[391].

Besides, the construction sector, once again governed by speculative criteria, remained the major industrial activity; as in the past, clientelism linked the local political class with public institutions and the electorate once more corresponded to an extended system of corruption, welding together political and economic interests.

Such continuity in terms of an economic model was described as the result of the previous system of corruption that had linked the local political elites with that cartel of entrepreneurs governed by the Cavalieri. That system had in fact acted as '*a natural selector*' (Informant A2) so that once the Cavalieri's monopoly collapsed this was substituted by a new cartel of entrepreneurs whose success was again simultaneously based on their proximity to political power and in their symbiotic collusion with the dominant mafia clan.

However, this latter, while it had previously acted as a mere military deterrent, under the new regime improved its ability to mediate between political, economic and social interests and so '*to assume its most important role which is not only to have a monopoly of violence in a given territory but also to acquire… the ability to provide services not only in*

[391] As discussed in chapter 7, the political elites multiplied the number of private companies, associations and cooperatives in order to control resources and to exploit them as clientelistic apparatuses.

terms of protection but more importantly in terms of connections and mediation between different actors (Informant S4).

Hence, paradoxical though it may seem, if the crisis of the early 1990s provided any window of opportunity in Catania, it did so for the mafia. By increasing its economic vocation, *Cosa Nostra* acquired further social consensus in that it began to base its power more and more on its capacity to mediate and connect political and economic interests.

The various[392] racketeering systems the mafia imposed on over 80% of the local economy, while for many represented an unbearable burden, for some signified access to an exclusive club with exclusive benefits. Within the new regime, Santapaola's soft strategy proved to be highly successful given the wide degree of continuity in the exercise of political and economic power. It is therefore possible to claim that while in Palermo the mafia with its violence against the city establishment had acted as a sort of anti-State against the Italian State, in Catania *Cosa Nostra*, aiming at gathering political, economic and social consensus, acted and continued to act as a sort of State within the State

Finally, a similar level of continuity with the past can be found in the way the new political elite of the city hampered a collective demand for change by again promoting social behaviours and cultural patterns in support of individual interests and thereby jeopardising voters' ability to recognise common issues and formulate common requests. This inevitably prevented the transition from clients to citizens (Lawson and Greene, 2012) that would have allowed voters to question the return of clientelistic politics and "view their patrons' largesse as a right rather than an obligation that must be repaid with political loyalty" (Ibid, 28).

In a similar way to the period before the crisis, although many inevitably disliked the impact the budgetary void left by the centre-right administration had on the city's administration and

[392] In chapter 7 (subsection 7.2.2) it was explained that apart from imposing a tax on economic activities, the clans, also exercised control by imposing their choice of delivery companies, items and clients to recruit.

public economy[393], voters kept on supporting it as those they elected could still provide social and economic opportunities otherwise impossible to access.

Notwithstanding the fact that during the centre-right administration Catania was dragged to the bottom of national league tables because of its poor services, widespread unemployment across gender, age and social classes, a shortage of housing, illiteracy and extensive criminal behaviour,, the only opposition to the status quo was exercised by a few and often isolated social cooperatives and associations that had, however, to compete with those exploited by political patrons to access and govern public funds. Here again the proximity to a political patron rather than the quality of the services provided remained the criteria even for the composition and development of such networks. As before the crisis of the early 1990s the call for change remained an affair involving a minority of people therefore giving little hope for an imminent or foreseeable change of course.

8.1.2 Catania: a victim rather than a vehicle of the crisis

As it was claimed in chapter 1, the novel approach of this research lies not only in adopting a specific local context to examine and explain the crisis of the early 1990s but also in first exploring the meanings behind the notion of crisis rather than taking it as a vague analytical starting point. In doing this, the aim has been to establish a theoretical framework that could guide the empirical investigation and the interpretation of its outcomes in order to provide some final conclusions on the nature of the crisis in the city of Catania.

In this respect, the first point to address is that whereas the collapse of the local party system can be considered in Koselleck's (1988) terms as an 'extraordinary event' that undermined that specific political organisation, it cannot be considered a genuine 'turning point' from the past because, notwithstanding the changes in terms of political parties, electoral organisations

[393] As discussed in chapter 7, bankruptcy of the council during years jeopardised the financial integrity of the entire public and publically assisted sector, threatening the job security of thousands of employees.

and, more importantly, the balance of power between the executive and the city council[394], the post-crisis period represented an '*evolutionary rather than transformative process*' (A3) where the new did look remarkably similar to the old (Bull and Rhodes, 2009). Accordingly, whereas the crisis revealed the 'blind spots' of the old local political system such as its inefficiency, inability to reform itself, its unaffordable costs and its corrupted relationship with the city economy, it only provided a brief window of opportunity in the weakly supported and short-lasting 'Catania Spring' during which, however, rather than a transformation there was a '*submersion*' (Informant P6) of the previous modus operandi that re-emerged once the most intense phase of the crisis was over.

As the findings suggested, such results can be explained first by the lack in the city of that 'demand for change' (Koselleck, 1988) or by the absence of that 'gathering of negative forces that take the form of a protest', 'shake the foundation of the system' that leads to what Burckhardt (1946) defines authentic crises. On the contrary, the crisis of the early 1990s was '*a partial revolution in Catania*'(P6) given that it undermined a political system that had never been questioned or opposed by any form of dissent due to a sort of '*block of critical thought*' (S3) that pervaded not only the less educated social classes but crucially even the more privileged ones. In fact, decades of clientelistic politics had, by promoting social behaviours and cultural patterns regulated by particularistic rather than universalistic criteria, "*created an alternative social organisation which functioned on the base of personal affiliations"*(M4) and in this way had compromised people's ability to recognise common issues and formulate common requests.

In this respect, in fact, unlike the position at national level, in the Sicilian city these events did not de-legitimise the old party system nor did it trigger what Habermas (1975)

[394] As discussed in chapter 6 (Section 6.2), during those years while the reforms of the central government involved only a re-organisation of the electoral system, local government reforms modified the institutional arrangements in favour of executive power.

defines as a 'motivational crisis' in the electorate. As discussed in chapter 6, the Dc remained largely supported in the local election in 1993 when Bianco was directly elected city major, notwithstanding the fact that the wave of anticorruption investigations had reached even Catania and exposed the inadequacy of that system which was governed mainly by the Christian Democrats[395].

While at national level, the political class was unfairly converted into a scapegoat in order to resolve the complexity of the crisis into a conflict between the partitocratic system and the rest of the country[396], in the Sicilian city voters did not punish the old mass clientelistic parties, their collapse was the result of exogenous turmoil that at local level caused only '*the temporary interruption of certain electoral dynamics*' (A2). These latter were again reactivated with the so-called return of the parties (Trigilia 2002) and the end of the Catania spring. Thus, paraphrasing Bull and Newell (2005), it can be claimed that the city acted as the victim of the crisis rather than its vehicle in that it suffered the consequences of events occurring somewhere else.

Accordingly, during 1980s local government was described by findings as already in a permanent administrative and financial turmoil as both widespread clientelism and corruption had become economically unaffordable per se. So despite the absence of a local call for change, its collapse was a predictable outcome that had only been postponed thanks to the financial support given by the national political system. The events of the early 1990s had '*only accelerated a decline that already existed*' (E6) and when the central party system began to crumble under the pressure of both the anti-corruption investigations and the

[395] Besides, as discussed in chapter 7, during the 2000s the centrist parties that arose from the hashes of the Dc were largely supported at local level.

[396] See Chapter 3 Section 3.1

economic demands arising from the process of European integration what was predictable suddenly began inevitable[397].

Yet, the weakening of the central system and the consequent collapse of the local one was not the result of periodic economic turmoil intrinsic to late capitalism (Merkel, 2013) but rather of Maastricht's request to rationalise that 'diffuse but not programmatic flow of state transfers' (Santoro, 2014) on which the mass clientelistic parties had based their strength. It was not a case of 'crisis of the welfare system' due to an increased demand of citizens, but rather one of a clientelistic system which had temporary lost those economic and, more importantly, political supports that had until then supported it.

Ultimately, both those actors who analysed 'what went wrong' and those who decided how to overcome the crisis belonged to a weakly supported minority that as such managed to enact only partial and temporary changes of course.

While in Catania a few young prosecutors ended the long-lasting collusion between their elderly colleagues and the dominant classes by leading an anti-corruption campaign[398], during those years no judicial revolution took place. The local *Tangetopoli* consisted of just a few trials, most of which were concluded '*either with the statute of modification or with the death and/or acquittal of the defendants*' (informant M5) and, more significantly, involved mainly the most symbolic political, economic and criminal actors leaving the impunity of those behind them untouched [399].

[397] As claimed in chapter 5, while in the mid-1970s a drop in resources due to international economic turmoil had undermined the integrity of Drago's pyramid, the local ruling parties could still rely on the support they received from the central ones. In contrast, by the 1990s this support had been lost and with it that specific party-centred model of clientelism.

[398] At the same time, though, in line with the national-scale analysis, the investigations were also supported by some testimonies provided by a few entrepreneurs who suddenly found the payment of bribes inconvenient and blamed the political class.

[399] Moreover, investigations did not involve the local bureaucratic system which had been under the control of parties and therefore an integral part of their system of corruption (see chapter 6).

Similarly, Bianco's 'Catania Spring' consisted of a few '*cosmetic solutions*' (Informant P3) and '*visible but ineffective changes*' (Informant, A2)[400] that, while reducing the inadequacy of the council and promoting a more virtuous idea of urban quality, crucially failed to enact any socio-economic modernization and to include the most deprived districts in its urban recovery[401]. This inevitably, as already discussed favoured the return of clientelistic politics.

In his *Reflexion on History* Burckhardt (1943) describes 'fake crises' as 'based on artificial agitations' (Ibid; 160), on 'dispute that have filled the air with lasting and deafening clamour, yet without leading to vital transformation' (Ibid, 141) or shaking the foundation of the system. It follows that to be authentic a crisis has to be triggered by forces in the form of protest and demand for change and, more importantly, there must be major differences between what came before and what came after it. On the contrary, the crisis of the early 1990s in Catania, while it cannot be considered utterly inauthentic taking into consideration the several changes in terms of parties and electoral organisation, equally it should not be explained as the beginning of a process of transformation enacted by a local critical diagnosis of what went wrong, but rather and more correctly as the beginning of a process of adjustment imposed by events, critical diagnoses and decisions taken elsewhere and at the end of which what came after was only an evolution of what had gone before.

8.1.3 The research Implications: the self-reinforcing nature of clientelism

The most comprehensive set of theoretical implications offered by findings regards clientelistic politics ~~and its impact on the quality of democracy~~. When exercised systematically within a given geo-political context, clientelism determines political

[400] As discussed in chapter 6, Bianco's administration was evaluated by adopting the distinction proposed by Trigilia (2005) between visible, symbolic and inexpensive policies and the long-term and costly.
[401] At the same time, though, findings suggested that such administrative failures were also attributable to the inefficiency of the city's bureaucratic system and the lack of a renewed entrepreneurial class (See chapter 6 – subsection 6.2.1).

developments and socio-economic transformations in its favour[402] and therefore it resists external pressure for change.

In this respect, findings support those authors (Roniger, 2004; Briquet , 2009; Auyero, 2000; Piattoni, 2004; Volinturu, 2010; Kusche, 2013; Garcia, 2015) who question the economic approach according to which clientelistic politics is a temporary form of governance in backward areas that is, however, prophetically expected to disappear once economic development is achieved. On the contrary, it was shown that clientelism rather than being the product of an incomplete capitalistic rationalization (Graziano, 1977), is, in fact, the major obstacle to this occurring[403] in that it directly causes and feeds on weak economic modernisation[404].

Similarly, findings diverge from those approaches that see clientelism as the result of social and cultural models denoted by familism (Banfiled, 1958) and weak social capital (Putman, 1993)[405]. By contrast, such weaknesses seem to be generated by political patrons' promotion of individual rather than collective mobilization and participation in private rather than public issues[406]. This inevitably fragments any potential collective response and in turn increases competition and reciprocal distrust rather than cooperation between people. Finally, findings challenge those approaches that see clientelistic politics as strictly linked to specific electoral and institutional arrangements, such as the party system in Italy until the

[402] On the self-reinforcing nature of clientelism see also Della Porta and Vannucci (1999); Caciagli, (2009); Golden (2010) and Lawson and Greene (2012).
[403] Thus contrary to Piattoni (1998 cited in Briquet, 2009) findings suggest that clientelistic resources directed towards social and/or economic elites do not trigger economic modernisation but rather favour restricted groups of entrepreneurs who exclusively rely on public resources and operate around publically assisted sectors.
[404] Accordingly, findings showed that the fragmentation of policies and resources into short-term and particularistic exchanges with clients prevents the formulation and the financial support of long-term and programmatic policies and investments through which economic modernization and rationalization could be achieved. Economic underdevelopment is in turn exploited by patrons as an electoral pool.
[405] As discussed in chapter 1, a strong 'social capital' by including the ability of a given population to cooperate and organise, to collectively participate in the formulation of demands and develop extra-familiar social networks is assumed to be a key factor for an economic development to occur (see Trigilia, 2011).
[406] As some authors (Sotiropoulos, 2006; Golden, 2010; Kusche, 2013) highlight, the notion of particularism is in complete contrast with that of universalism and equality adopted by programmatic politics.

early 1990s (Graziano, 1977; Mattina; 2007). Accordingly, as the evolution from party to leader-centred clientelism in Catania demonstrates, the transition from clientelistic to programmatic politics is not necessary triggered by specific types of democratic arrangements, whether consociative or competitive (Fabbrini, 2009; Morlino, 2009), party or leader-centred, or proportional or bi-polar. By contrast, regardless of formal organisations, that transition won't take place as long as socio-economic opportunities rely on public resources monopolised by patrons.

8.1.3 Clientelism: a peculiar or an anomalous type of politics?

Notwithstanding such negative traits, earlier and more recent accounts have described clientelism as an alternative rather than a pathological form of politicisation and democratisation of backward areas. So, while it promotes personal rather than impartial relationships between public authority, society and economy, it still manages to mediate conflicts, neutralise anti-democratic forces (Tarrow, 1967)[407], encourage the social mobility of some sections of the middle and working classes (Mattina, 2007), give access to political participation (La Palombara,1964)[408], and thereby to modern political organisation.

Contrary to these views, findings showed first that clientelism impedes rather than promotes social mobility; the notion of 'multi-layered clientelism' in fact stressed the way patrons purposively deliver benefits with small or big economic and social values to confirm clients' socio-economic status. This inevitably replicates those disparities[409] and socio-economic hierarchies that make patrons' discretional power indispensable.

[407] In regards to post-war Italy, Tarrow (1967) stressed the ability of clientelism to ensure cohesion to the new democratic regime by smothering the tensions arisen from the social and economic modernization of the country.

[408] As stressed by Briquet (2009), La Palombara primarily focuses on the empirical functioning of clientelism regardless of its discrepancy from mainstream democratic norms (Ibid; 345).

[409] In this respect, Mattina (2007) claims that clientelism enacts a 'double process' of social, economic and political inclusion and exclusion based not only on clients' fidelity but also on their influential power.

Moreover, it emerged that clientelism does not mediate conflicts but fragments them into single contests/competitions between single clients. Yet, these contests/competitions are never resolved; as observed by Caciagli (1977), in fact, clients' requests inevitably exceed the number of benefits available so that patrons need to play 'a game of bluff' by postponing solutions and suspending decisions in order to keep clients on a short leash.

Accordingly, findings favour the Weberian view (Muno, 2012) that sees clients unable to formulate a rational choice on whether or not to participate in the asymmetrical exchange governed by patrons. Nor do they oblige only when they are monitored or certain to obtain a benefit or out of a feeling of obligation (Lawson and Green, 2014)[410]. More prosaically, clients 'oblige voluntary' (Muno, 2012) because they are left with no alternative way to obtain socio-economic opportunities. While with more clientelistic hubs clients may be able to shop for patrons (Varraich, 2014), regardless of the one picked, the relationship remains vertical and in favour of the latter[411].

This ultimately suggests that patrons do not necessary "sleep peacefully as long as they can assure continuity in the clientele's remuneration" (Panebianco, 1988)[412]. While in fact a reduction of resources can initially threaten the integrity of a clientelistic system, in a politically assisted economy such a reduction, in the long run , increases even further the

[410] The two authors explain the patron-client relationship as regulated by a 'psychological mechanism of reciprocal obligation' that sees voters who receive benefits feeling indebtedness and gratitude to those who provided such benefits. On the contrary findings suggest clients oblige out of a state of necessity.
[411] Besides, Muno (2012) claims that, in order to fully grasp the nature of such an asymmetrical relationship, rather than look at rational choice and norm-oriented theories it is necessary to look at practice theory. This former, in fact, favours a cultural approach and focuses on how routines and everyday practices are determined by shared knowledge, symbolic system and cultural and cognitive codes.
[412] According to Panebianco (1988), in fact, a reduction in resources can trigger an 'authority crisis' as patrons, who closely rely on those resources to supply their lack of social presence, are unable to satisfy their clients' requests.

need for political mediation to access them (Caruso, 2013)[413] enlarging rather than reducing the power hold of patrons[414].

8..1.4 Clientelism, and the rise of corruption

A further set of implications highlighted by findings deals with the ways clientelism leads to the spread of political corruption. Yet, while the permanent need of resources to fuel the clientelistic appeal drives patrons to resort to corruption to extract extra funds to invest[415], it was also suggested that the primacy of particularistic and private interests over collective and public ones and discriminatory criteria over universal ones promoted by patrons and transversally recognised across social classes, creates a culture and sets of social norms and interaction[416] within which corruption can easily spread[417].

Moreover, findings suggest that, similar to clientelism, corruption is able to determine political and socio-economic models in its favour. Accordingly, in contrast to the principle of equality and impartiality, it rewards those public and economic actors keen and able to participate in illicit exchange and simultaneously excludes those who are not. It favours covert interactions between elites at the expense of accountability and transparency[418]. It increases both the dependence of the private economy on political power and the use of

[413] The author in fact stresses that when resources 'are not enough to satisfy everybody's needs' clients oblige even more to the asymmetrical exchange with patrons.
[414] Thus, although clientelism has been associated with both demographic developments and the expansion of the welfare state (Mattina, 2007), findings showed it can still maintain its integrity even when both these conditions cease to occur.
[415] On this point see also Della Porta and Vannucci (1997); Golden (2000); Singer (2009); Muno (2012); Vannucci and Sberna (2013); Varraich, (2014).
[416] As claimed above, Hicken (2011 cited in Varraich, 2014) argues that clientelism may in fact be creating "a culture of impunity" within which it is harder to punish individuals for corrupt behaviour (Ibid; 11).
[417] Besides, as claimed in chapters 6 and 8, tolerance and participation in clientelistic and corruption exchanges, in turn, provides opportunities for organised crime to easily form partnerships with the economic and administrative classes and thus evolve from a mere parasitic stage to a symbiotic one (on this point see Trigilia, 2011 and Sciarrone, 2014).
[418] Similarly, the horizontal accountability that should regulate the checks and balances between state institutions is undermined as this is substituted by informal networks of alliances within which each institution tolerates and favours the corruption among other institutions.

public resources not only for electoral purposes but also for self-enrichment. Furthermore, in line with Vannucci (2009), findings show that corruption discourages any electoral backlash on those who participate as public opinion becomes more and more accustomed to scandals and, more importantly, in many ways plays an active part in what Sassoon (2008) describes as the 'democratization of corruption'[419].

8.1.6 Clientelism and the crisis within democracy

A final set of implications stressed by the findings deals with the way clientelism can, on the one hand, increase the impact that a political and/or economic crisis can have on a given democratic paradigm and, on the other, reduce the opportunity for change that such crises often offer.

As discussed in chapter 2, among the several accounts of a crisis within a democracy, it is possible to distinguish between those that look at the increasing social pressure on state budgets (Crozier, Huntington, Watanuki, 1975 cited in Merkel, 2013) and those that point at the cyclical economic turmoil intrinsic to capitalism (Habermas, 1975; Clarke, 1994 cited in Merkel 2013). In both cases, however, such events can lead to an authority crisis in government from which a motivational crisis in the electorate follows that can destabilise the normal functioning of the system[420].

Yet, although every democratic system can be affected by such turmoil, the impact on the stability, reliability and effectiveness of a given system will ultimately depend on its institutional, economic and social integrity[421]. Therefore, democracies regulated by

[419] At the same time, though, findings suggest that, as in the case of clientelism, widespread corruption among the elites is tolerated by people as it promotes what Sassoon (2008) defines as the' democratization of corruption', that is when people do participate in minor or major forms of corruption and thereby tolerate the ones of the elites.

[420] As claimed in chapter 2 (section 2.3), in fact, Habermas (1975) describes the combination of these different stages as an 'escalating process': from the periodic crises of capitalistic economy to the rational one affecting political and institutional authorities and the motivational one affecting the electorate in relation to those elected.

[421] As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3) Morlino (1986 in Bartolini, Cotta, Morlino, Panebianco, Pasquino, 1986)) claims that whether or not a given crisis will undermine the integrity of a democratic regime will depend

clientelistic relationships between those who govern and those who are governed and which are characterised by intrinsic failures, such as financial insecurity, poor government stability, responsiveness, accountability and compliance with the rule of law, are inevitably more affected by crises than more efficient programmatic democracies.

Yet, at the same time, the self-reinforcing nature of clientelism impedes, first, any real change in political culture and action[422] and, secondly, the ability of the electorate to punish political representatives (Golden, 2010)[423], giving way to/leading to evolutionary rather than transformative crisis. Accordingly, as the transition from the First to the Second Republic in the city of Catania proves, a crisis exclusively triggered by exogenous factors rather than by endogenous calls for change converts those actors and institutions, supposed to analyse 'what went wrong' and 'decide' how to overcome the crisis, into the victims rather than the cause/the vehicle of such events**.** Crucially and more significantly, though, such passivity can act as an element of resistance to change; this impedes any real questioning of the old democratic paradigm, favouring its re-adjustment rather than transformation within new political organisations.

8.2 Limitations and suggestions for further researches

This concluding section provides a reflection on the research's limitations with the scope to indicate, however, further investigations/research that could help to fill these gaps. An initial point to stress in this regard is the lack of prior studies on the research topic. In spite of the exceptional number and variety of national-scale accounts there is not much

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also upon the ability of its the political and institutional classes in formualting new aggrements in order to overcome the inconsistencies revealed by the crisis.

[422] As above mentioned, in fact, due to its self-generating/reinforcing nature, clientelism is able to determine the quality of political and administrative classes, the structure of political organisations and rootedness and the electoral behave of voters.

[423] As claimed above, in fact, the author claims that "Even when voters collectively come to disapprove of major policy stands endorsed by the dominant party, voters in each electoral district retain a strong incentive to continue to endorse their legislative incumbent because of the constituency service – the patronage – he provides. The system, in short, is self-enforcing even when a majority of citizens dislike it" (Ibid; 24).

literature available that focuses on a local setting to describe and explain the crisis of the early 1990s[424]. Moreover, concerning the city of Catania, except from Caciagli's (1977) remarkable work on the local Dc's regime until the mid-1970s and those precious analysis on the local electoral readjustment during the immediate post-crisis phase (Lanza, 2004 in Lanza, Piazza and Vacante; Lanza and Timpanaro, 1997; Lanza and Piazza, 2002), the literature available leaves much to be desired[425].

Yet, in line with Shin and Agnew (2008), this research suggests that further studies on political, economic and social/societal systems should also take into account the different geographical contexts in which they are set. As has been shown, in terms of the causes, course and consequences of the crisis of the First Republic there were major differences between the effects at the national and local level and also some difference at a very local level such as between Catania and Palermo. Similarly, it can be assumed that the way a national party such as the Fi organised its appeal, selected its members and leaders, formed coalitions and became established in local territories was different in Catania than in Mantova or Brescia, especially if the socio-economic disparity between the northern and southern regions of the country is taken into account. It is therefore necessary to direct further research at how local contexts determine the way political, economic and social/societal models are shaped.

Moreover, a second factor to highlight regards the broadness of the research's objects and aims. The complexity of the crisis examined demanded a multi-disciplinary analytical approach in order to take into account the political system of the city in its relationship with the local economy and society. Besides, whereas the crisis lasted just a few years, the time

[424] An exception is the work of Trigilia (2005) on the effects of the reforms of the local governments

[425] In methodological terms, this gap was overcome by adopting a qualitative approach to gain not only informants' patterns of interpretations (explanatory) but also those sets of information (exploratory) otherwise not available (see chapter 4 section 4.0).

frame adopted had to include both the earlier and subsequent decades[426]. Ultimately, this was reflected in the composition of the sample selected in that it had to represent equally different categories of informants, with an average of 6-7 per group.

Such an approach inevitably tended to narrow the focus exclusively to one of the areas explored, to one of the category of informants selected and to a shorter time frame. In this respect, further research should closely examine, for instance, the so-called personalisation of the executive along with the development of what Calise (2000) defines as the micro-clientelistic parties of the so-called Second Republic.

As discussed in Chapter 7, national leaders and their parties, such as Silvio Berlusconi and his Fi, were challenged at local level by those new centrist parties that emerged from the ex-Dc factions and organised around local electoral office holders. More attention should, therefore, be addressed to the way these new leaders and their personal parties managed to assume the traditional role of mediator previously played by the parties' apparatuses. Here again, while there is extensive literature on the effects of such personalisation of political appeal at national level, there is little in regards to those at the local level.

[426] Both at national and local level the time frame included five decades, from the 1960s to the 2010s

APPENDIX 1 – Glossary

Political parties 1st Republic

Dc – *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democrats)

Msi – *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement)

Pci – *Partito Communista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party)

Pli – *Partito Liberale Italiano* (Italian Liberal Party)

Pri – *Partito Repubblicano Italiano* (Italian Republican Party)

Psi – *Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party)

Political parties 2nd Republic

An – *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance)

Ccd – *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (Christian Democratic Centre

Cdu – *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (United Christian Democrats)

Fi – *Forza Italia* (Come on Italy)

La Rete (The Net)

Lega Nord (Northern League)

Mpa – *Movimento per l'autonomia* (Movement for the Independence)

Pds – *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (Democratic Party of the Left)

Pdl – *Popolo delle Liberta'* (The People of Freedom)

Sfl – *Sicilia Forte e Libera* (Sicily Strong and Free)

Udc – *Unione di Centro* (Union of the Centre)

Cds – *Centro Democratico Siciliano* (Sicilian Democratic Centre)

Associations

Ance – *Associazione Nazionale Costruttori Edili* (The Building Contractors National Association)

Anci *– Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani* **(**The Italian Councils National Association)

Camera di Commercio (Chamber of Commerce)

Confcommercio (General Confederation of Enterprises, Professionals and Self-Employment)

Confesercenti (the General Confederation of Operators)

Confindustria (General Confederation of Italian Industry)

Public Authorities and Institutions

Caf *– Centro Assistanza Fiscale* (Tax Assistance Centre)

Commissione Parlamentare Anti-Mafia (Anti-Mafia Parliamentary Commission)

Istat *– Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (The Italian National Institute of Statistics)

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