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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# NEOLIBERALISM AND CONTROL STRATEGIES

## The Urban Security Policies in Italy

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**ABSTRACT:** From the early 1990s, In Italy discourses and practices referring to urban security and prevention have increased. The purpose of this article is to highlight the specific characteristics of the Italian approach to urban security. Firstly, the strong leadership of local governments in defining the urban security policy, in a conflictual dynamic of national vs local. Secondly, the link between the issue of security and immigration, both at national and local levels. The reconstruction of the history of urban security policies in Italy is aimed at answering the following question: can we interpret the Italian case, despite its national specificity, as coherent with the shift in the culture of control argued by David Garland in relation to the UK and the US contexts? We argue that, also in the Italian context, we witnessed, on one hand, the use of local adaptive policies, in line with neoliberal principles. On the other hand, the rise of punitive populism in the rhetoric and practices, not only at the central State level, but also at local level where adaptive policies were developed together with administrative punitive measures. The conclusions propose a critical account of Italian urban security policies.

**KEYWORDS:** Control Strategies, Italy, Local Governments, Neoliberalism, Urban Security Policies.

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## 1. Introduction

In Europe, in the last three decades, we have seen a convergent process concerning urban security policies, especially in relation to the so-called preventive turn (Crawford, 2009a). From the early 1990s, in Italy, as well as in other European countries, discourses and practices referring to urban security and prevention have increased. Urban security policy is a definition that embraces very different practices affecting security in the cities (Selmini, 2004a). In this article, we will consider, on one hand, the new way of conceptualizing and producing urban security policies (or safety, as it is named in large part of the literature) including the urban quality of life, citizen's perception of community safety, extra-penal crime prevention strategies and new public actors such as local and regional governments. On the other hand, we will consider the national policies focused on urban security (either improving the new meaning of community safety through central/local partnership, or simply proposing traditional forms of control and repression of crime in the city).

The reconstruction of the history of urban security policies in Italy is aimed at answering the following questions: can we interpret the Italian case, despite its national specificity, as coherent with the shift in the culture of control argued by David Garland (2000; 2001) in relation to the UK and the US contexts? Consequently, can the two different patterns of public action in the security policy field, underlined by Garland (2001: 140) in UK and US, be observed in Italy? That is, (I) an adaptive strategy (related to community safety), stressing prevention and local partnership, more in line with neoliberal principles and (II) a sovereign state strategy (concerning control and repression in the cities), stressing enhanced control and punishment, more in line with neo-conservative principles?

The purpose of this article is also to highlight the specific characteristics of the Italian approach to urban security policies in the last three decades. Firstly, the strong leadership of local governments and regional authorities (mostly in the North and the Centre of the country, run by centre-left coalitions) in defining the urban security policy, in a conflictual dynamic of national vs local. Secondly, the link between the issue of security and immigration, both at national and local levels.

Our main argument is that, despite the specific Italian approach to urban security policies, we can recognize, also in this context, the use of local adaptive policies, in line with neoliberal principles, that tend towards situational practices, harm reduction dynamics, and the use of CCTV and surveillance in general. On the other hand, we can identify a rise of punitive populism in the rhetoric and practices, not only at the central State level (where a sovereign state strategy plays its role), but also at local level where

adaptive policies were developed together with administrative punitive measures (Selmini, 2005). The conclusions propose a critical account of Italian urban security policies.

## **2. How neoliberalism affects the (urban) security policy change**

Neoliberalism risks to be a “chaotic concept” (Jessop, 2013). Analysing 148 articles published from 1990 to 2004, Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) have found that the term neoliberalism, when debated, is often undefined and used with different frequency by ideological groups (it appears less in articles that are in favour of free market) to characterize an excessively broad variety of phenomena. Being a complex, multifaceted phenomenon (Moini, 2015b) neoliberalism “coexists with elements from other discourses, strategies, and organizational patterns. Thus, it is better seen as one set of elements in the repertoire of Western economic, political, and ideological discourse than as a singular, univocal, and internally coherent discourse in its own right” (Jessop, 2002: 453).

Following Jessop (2002), we can identify some elements that give us a general definition of neoliberalism. Ideologically, the main argument is that economic, political, and social relations perform better through free choices of rational actors. Economically, neoliberalism endorses the expansion of the market economy. Politically, it calls for a state with limited substantive powers of economic and social intervention.

It is also important to emphasize that neoliberalism is not simply about laissez-faire economics. Following Davies (2014: 310), in the neoliberalism approach the role of the State is crucial to “produce and reproduce the rules of institutions and individual conduct, in ways that accord with a certain ethical and political vision”, that is “dominated by an idea of competitive activity”. Moreover, neoliberalism has been defined as an inventive, constructivist, modernizing force. Neoliberal policies, actually, affect institutions and activities outside the market (i.e. universities, households, public administrations, trade unions and, as far as this article is concerned, the security policies). The strategy is to bring non-market institutions inside the market (privatization), to “reinvent them in a ‘market-like’ way”, or to “neutralize or disband them”.

The “neoliberal regime shift” (Jessop, 2002) in advanced capitalistic economies can be placed in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, with the political leaderships of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA (and in other Anglo-Saxon countries governed by “uncoordinated market economies”). In these countries have emerged policies and discourses in the direction of liberalisation such as privatisation, deregula-

tion, market proxies in the public sector and tax reduction. Moreover, we can see a revised neoliberal approach during the Nineties in governments inspired by the so-called Third Way, such as Tony Blair's government in UK and Bill Clinton's presidency in US. During the 1980s and 1990s processes of "neoliberal policy adjustments" (Jessop, 2002) began also in other western European countries, with solid public welfare and "coordinated economies".

Concerning the aims of this article, it is interesting to note the coexistence of the neoliberal regime shift in the US and UK with a parallel change of perspective into Anglo-Saxon criminological perspectives. As it has been noted (Melossi, 2002a), the main element of this new discourse on crime was to set aside the aetiology (social, cultural, psychological) of deviance and crime. On the one hand, we saw the rise of a "criminology of revenge" as a conservative reaction to the approaches of radical critique of the institutions of control and punishment in the 1960s; on the other hand, the "criminology of the self", or "criminology of everyday life" (Garland, 2001), influenced by theories such as rational choice, routine activity, situational crime prevention. These new criminological perspectives operated an ideological separation of the criminal matter from its social and historical context.

Following Garland (2001: 137), we can also refer to the co-presence, in contemporary (UK and US) society, of "a criminology of the other, of the threatening outcast, the fearsome stranger, the dangerous, the excluded and the embittered" and of a "criminology of the self, that characterizes offenders as normal, rational consumers, just like us". With the exclusion of the once dominant welfarist criminology "that depicted the offender as disadvantaged or poorly socialized and made it the state's responsibility, in social as well as in penal policy, to take positive steps of a remedial kind".

From the criminological theories to the security policies, it is possible to identify new models of intervention based, respectively, on neoconservative and neoliberal approaches: a sovereign state strategy, based on control and expressive punishment and an adaptive strategy, based on prevention and partnership (Garland, 2001).

The sovereign state strategy, essentially based on expressive and populist measures, refers to enhanced control and a zero tolerance approach, promoted by the penal punishment system. This can be noticed in the re-emergence of punitive sanctions and expressive justice and in the change in the emotional tone of crime policy (from cool to hot). Actually, the security discourse is not anymore a reserve for elites of professional experts, administrators and policy makers, but on the contrary, it becomes central in the public debate. The discourses of political entrepreneurs and mass media are widely based on an emotive storytelling: collective emotions such as outrage and anger have become a basic component of policymaking. The politicization of the security issue fa-

voured a new populist style together with reassurance messages to promote reassurance policies.

Another highly important element of this new “culture of control” is the focus on the “victim” that “has come to have the status of a ‘representative individual’ in contemporary society” (Garland, 2000: 351). The centrality assumed by the victim is associated with the decreasing relevance attributed to measures aiming at recovering and re-socialising offenders. The interpretation of the prison is in line with this shift in discourses, becoming not a mechanism of rehabilitation but rather a mean of incapacitation and punishment of the criminal.

The adaptive strategy, on the contrary, proposes local policies outside the traditional areas of action of the criminal justice system. The main policy model is the multi-level governance based on territorial and public-private partnerships, community activation and citizens’ participation, control technologies such as CCTV and street furniture with deterrent designs. The main attempt is harm reduction, improving perceived security, contrasting urban decay and incivilities, increasing the urban quality of life for residents, city users and tourists.

The so-called new prevention policies (Selmini 2004b) represent the main model for the urban security policies (community safety policies, in the Anglo-Saxon context) of the adaptive strategy. The so-called situational prevention (Clarke, 1983) is more in line with the neoliberalist principles. It refers directly to the criminology of the self and can be seen as the specific preventive model developed, among the European countries, mainly by the UK government, during the 1980s (inspired by US experimentations on the 1970s). Its aim is to take action regarding the situation that can encourage crime or acts of incivility, modifying it in a less favourable context for the potential criminal. The idea, therefore, is to increase the cost or reduce the benefits of the illegal (or uncivilized) action through the manipulation of the urban environment. According to this perspective, the attention of the policies has to move from the motivations of the criminal to the factors that can promote criminal opportunities. This preventive model follows also the principle of individual responsibility of the (potential) victims: they can prevent offence with their behaviours.

According to the classification of Ronald V. Clarke (1997: 18), one of the leading exponents of this criminological approach, situational crime prevention interventions are of different types. Interventions that increase the perceived effort (target hardening, access control, deflecting offenders, controlling facilitators). Interventions that increase the perceived risks (entry/exit screening, formal surveillance, surveillance by employees, natural surveillance). Interventions that reduce anticipated rewards (target removal, identifying property, temptation reduction, denying benefit). Interventions that

remove the excuses (rule setting, stimulating conscience, controlling dis-inhibitors, facilitating compliance).

A situational mentality, it was observed (Crawford, 2009b: 11), "speaks the language of the market, of supply and demand, risk and reward, opportunities and costs, while appealing to regulation beyond the state through private and quasi-private auspices". We see in this approach the direct influence of the neoliberal economic thought (the calculative vision of the social actors) on criminal (and other social) behaviour, that Davies (2014) commented as one of the main features of neoliberalism: the capacity of economics to explain the social behaviour in general.

In the new preventive approach, we see other models of crime prevention policies (Selmini, 2004b): the "social" and the "communitarian". The first, more in line with a once dominant welfarist criminology was developed mainly in France during the 1980s and theorized in the same period by the British left realism criminologists (Robert, 2009). This model proposes ad hoc measures of local social policies aimed to conflict mediation and social inclusion through the involvement of the local welfare agencies, in collaboration with the third sector and the police. The communitarian model presents two different approaches for the citizens' participation. One, more in line with situational principles, deals with a communitarian control, based on residents' vigilance and reporting activities (such as the neighbourhood watch experiences in UK and US or the so-called "ronde" in Italy). The other, more in line with the democratic model of citizen participation, deals with the activation of citizenship for socio-cultural initiatives on the territory in an inclusive perspective.

Such policy options were suitable for the growing attention given by local governments, globally, to security and quality of life issues. The right of citizens to have access to safe urban spaces needs not only crime prevention activities, but also efforts to contrast the so-called urban and social decay. This concept, also influenced by the broken windows theory of Wilson and Kelling (1982), refers to phenomena that have a high visibility and that may increase the citizens' feelings of insecurity, such as vandalism, drug dealing and drug consumption in open spaces, street prostitution, etc. Another key-aspect is that this concept does not include crimes with a low visibility, such as mafia and other organized criminal activities, domestic violence and the white-collar crimes, due to their low impact on perception of urban security.

In this sense, the concept of security must be expanded in its scope of application beyond the traditional fields of the criminal justice system (public order and public security, under the jurisdiction of the state). The city, as a potential attractor of international capital, strategic headquarters of multinationals, host of cultural, economic, sportive mega-events (Roche, 2000) cannot ignore security and urban quality in order

to build its international brand to compete in the global market. As it was observed, “distinctive neoliberal policies are those which encourage individuals, communities, students and regions to exert themselves competitively, and produce ‘scores’ of who is winning and losing” (Davies, 2014: 315). This is true also for cities seen “as engines of economic growth, key centres of economic, political, and social innovation, and key actors in promoting and consolidating international competitiveness” (Jessop, 2002: 465).

As Garland noted (2000; 2001), the rise of these new strategies of crime control (the sovereign state and the adaptive) originated from the changes that have occurred from the 1970s in social structures and cultural sensibilities of UK and US societies, defined by the author “high crime rates societies”<sup>1</sup>. According to the author, these strategies respond to a large part of the public opinion and especially to the middle class that from the beginning of the 1970s claimed the need for more punitive interventions on crime and was less in favour of corrective measures targeting criminals<sup>2</sup>. The critique to penal welfare systems based on the social rehabilitation of criminals is the main argument supporting both those models of policies. It is a common argument in neoliberal and neoconservative discourses: “social policy came to be seen as part of the problem of crime and disorder rather than as contributing to preventive solution” (Crawford, 2009b: 4).

This argument is also important regarding the critique against the penal welfare system: the corrective policies, the social and psychological intervention on prisoners, in particular, judged as ineffective (nothing works). The penal welfare system and the social workers that are involved in it are guilty of paternalism: they have favoured the spreading of a culture of state dependency and of lack of citizens' personal responsibility, without preventing the increasing of crime rates.

The criticism against the penal welfare system is part of the broader crisis of legitimacy of the welfare state as the guiding mechanism of the post-industrial society. In other ways, we can see the advent of a new punitive approach in criminal matters, in place of the penal welfare principles, typical of the process of modern civilization, as

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<sup>1</sup> As Garland pointed out (2001: 90), the “late modernity’s impact upon crime rates was a multi-dimensional one that involved: (i) increased opportunities for crime, (ii) reduced situational controls, (iii) an increase in the population ‘at risk’, and (iv) a reduction in the efficacy of social and self controls as a consequence of shifts in social ecology and changing cultural norms”. In this sense, we can consider the rise of the crime rates in the Sixties as one of the consequences of modernity (Giddens, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> As Garland underlines, however, the peak of punitive reaction is not in tune with the peak of crime rates in UK and US. Starting from the 1990s, actually, we witness a stabilization and then a decline of crime rates in many western countries. However, it is in these years that we observe a global spread of punitive discourses and the statement of concepts, policies and practices based on fear of crime, control and crime prevention throughout western societies.

the direct consequence of the State's progressive abandonment of its social protector role, in the last thirty years (Bauman, 1999; Castel, 2003; Wacquant, 1999). A relation between the crisis of welfare state and the security issue is thoroughly analysed by the sociologist Wacquant (1999; 2012), who connected the decline of the welfare state to the "glorification of the penal state". Analysing the spread of moral panic throughout European countries, he defines youth deviance, urban violence, incivilities and the ghettos (*quartiers difficiles* or *sensibles* in French) as apparent targets of security policies. According to the author, this new approach on urban security is the result of stereotypes that increase rhetoric and as a consequence fallacies are treated as social facts. For Wacquant, the origin of this discourse was in the 1970s, when in the US the criminal justice policies increased and correspondently the welfare policies decreased. The American translators of this rhetoric are, for example, experts such as neo-conservative broken windows theorists Wilson and Kelling and politicians like the former mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, and his zero tolerance slogan.

His critical interpretation links the rising of punitive and zero tolerance discourse to the neoliberal policies that cut the welfare programmes: while the national state, following the neoliberal frame, has become unable to reassure its citizenship with social and economic policies, the state in a neoconservative perspective is legitimated by its protective role carried out through the penal system. "The penalisation of poverty emerged as a core element of the domestic implementation and transborder diffusion of the neoliberal project, the 'iron fist' of the penal state mating with the 'invisible hand' of the market in conjunction with the fraying of the social safety net" (Wacquant, 2012: 67).

Summarizing the literature we have discussed here, we need to understand how this can help to define the Italian approach to urban security policies. Regarding the so-called adaptive strategies, Adam Crawford (2009b: 2), analysing the crime prevention policies in Europe in a comparative perspective, argued that we can underline some convergent phenomena in the field of security in different countries (including Italy). 1) A public concern over increased crime and the fear of crime, especially related to crime against property. 2) A growing acknowledgement of the limited capacity of formal institutions of criminal justice to be adequate to reduce crime. 3) A concern that many of the traditional means of informal control may be fragmenting and weakening. 4) A decline of the role of social welfare based responses to crime (especially among liberal elites) with the concomitant rise in importance of the role of the victims of crime within public policies. 5) The search for alternative means to traditional punitive measures for controlling crime. Following Robert (2009), despite the differences between countries, and the initial duality between a social prevention in France and a situational



prevention in the UK, it is possible today to talk about a European prevention model. It is based on the rise of a "technological-situational model" regulated by a social-democratic approach which focuses on the protection of potential victims and the development of a "proletariat of surveillance" with insecure jobs. This model puts into the background the social prevention in favour of the situational one. This change met the increase of power of the private security market. The UK governments have openly encouraged this market while the continental European countries have simply let it grow.

Concerning the punitive shift linked to the so-called sovereign state strategy, Cavadino and Dignan (2006) argued that the relevant differences of the penalties are likely to persist despite globalization. They analysed the relevant variation of the imprisonment rates in 12 contemporary capitalist countries (including Italy), classified by their model of political economy. The categories of political economy used to classify the 12 countries were neo-liberal, conservative corporatist (including Italy), social democratic or oriental corporatist. The neo-liberal countries (such as UK and US) showed the highest imprisonment rates, explained by the authors with economic inequality: the greater the inequality in a society the higher the overall level of punishment. More general, as a society moves towards a neoliberal system, its imprisonment rate tends to increase<sup>3</sup>.

In Italy, considering the decisive role of the cultural embeddedness of social control (Melossi, 2001), Gallo (2014: 599) argued coexisting dynamics of repression and leniency. To demonstrate this, Gallo analysed the 1970-2008 prison rates in comparison with those of England and Wales. The alternation between punitiveness and moderation, visible in Italian prison rates – according to the author (Gallo, 2014: 602) – “is in fact a broader feature of Italian penalty”. Italy, as “mixed market economy” (a hybrid political economy model between liberal market-economy of the UK and co-ordinate market economy of Germany), it presents also a mixed model of punishment, co-existing with leniency, due to its specific political culture<sup>4</sup>, political dynamics and political institutions. Moreover, the same data used by Gallo shows an increase of imprisonment rates, which has doubled in 40 years (from 40 to almost 80 per 100.000) despite pardon and amnesty.

<sup>3</sup> For a critic of these interpretations, see Crawford, 2009b.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. the emphasis on “social solidarity derived from Italy’s Leftist ideologies, as from Catholicism, incentivising the resocialization of economic marginality and deviance” (Gallo, 2014: 604).

### 3. The rise of urban security policies in Italy

In Italy, starting from the early 1990s, the specific national security narration based on the war against the mafia and the political terrorism (especially in 1970s and 1980s) – organised by the institutional actors of the penal and political systems – has shifted into a wider public concern on street-crime and urban decay. Specifically, the urban security issue developed together with a distrustful attitude towards immigrants and specific marginalised groups.

This shift arose in the light of some important socio-economic, political and cultural events. In 1992, several investigations on corruption (so-called *Tangentopoli*) caused the end of the party system that had characterized the Italian democratic life after the Second World War up to the end of the cold war era. Soon, new, post-constitutional or outside of the constitutional frame (in the case of the post-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, then *Alleanza Nazionale*<sup>5</sup>) political parties, took the helm of the country. In particular, *Forza Italia* – the new party founded by the billionaire Silvio Berlusconi – and the *Lega Nord*<sup>6</sup> were new political realities characterized by a populist political style which had a strong influence on the change of rhetoric on security. Furthermore, the crisis of the role of the Italian political parties as intermediary between the state and the civil society accelerated.

In the same year, Cosa Nostra (Sicilian mafia organized crime) killed the anti-mafia prosecuting magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. After the great civil upheaval in Palermo and Sicily, that gave a strong impetus to the anti-mafia movement in Italy, the mafia issue has gradually left the centre of the public debate on security

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<sup>5</sup> The *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement) was a post-fascist party founded in 1946 by supporters of former dictator Benito Mussolini, that become in 1995 the conservative party *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance), merged in 2008 together with “Forza Italia” of Berlusconi, in the right wing party called *Popolo della Libertà* (People of Freedom), PDL.

<sup>6</sup> The *Lega Nord per l'indipendenza della Padania* (Northern League for the independence of Padania) is a regionalist party. Founded in 1989, it centred its agenda on devolution and strong autonomy of the Regions. The leaders of this party have frequently invoked the secession of the Northern Regions of Italy, re-named “Padania”, which are economically stronger than the rest of the country. One of the main issue is the defence of the territory of the North by the “invasion” of immigrants. Starting from 2014, the new Secretary Matteo Salvini has given a national aim to the politics of the party, trying to gain consensus also by the voters throughout Italy and not only in the traditional northern regions. This change followed a marked shift to the right wing, also cooperating with neo-fascist Italian movements and, at the EU level, with the French *Front National* of Marine Le Pen.

(Ioppolo, della Ratta-Rinaldi, Ricotta, 2015). As it was observed the issue of urban security, street-crime and urban decay (Melossi, 2002b) emerged in its place.

In 1992 the Maastricht Treaty was signed introducing for the EU members the requirement to keep sound fiscal policies, with debt limited to 60% of GDP and annual deficits no greater than 3% of GDP. This led to new restrictive financial manoeuvres and policies of privatization of public companies in order to comply with the public finances parameters, according to neoliberal and managerial principles. In Italy, the technical government (1992-1993) introduced an era of public spending cuts just before the new political parties' post-Tangentopoli in 1994. Neoliberal policy adjustments marked, in a bipartisan way, the executives succeeded in Italy in the last twenty years (Moini, 2015b).

With regard to the phenomenon of immigration, from the 1990s it has seen a dramatic increase: while in 1990 there were circa 500.000 immigrants, they reached the number of more than 5 million, thus representing circa 8% of the population. The immigration issue took on a central role in the debate on security (Barbagli, 2008; Dal Lago, 1999; Melossi 2003; Galantino and Ricotta, 2014).

The origin of the Italian debate on urban security started in Bologna in 1992, when the journal *Sicurezza e territorio* (Security and territory), promoted by the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS, Democratic Party of the Left)<sup>7</sup>, was set up. The main purpose of the journal, composed by experts, journalists, local politicians and executives, was the introduction in the Italian context of the models of local security policies implemented in other European countries such as France and UK.

Therefore, theses on incivility and urban insecurity met the interest of Italian mayors, especially in the centre-north of the country and in those regions governed by centre-left coalitions (Selmini, 2000), in an attempt to answer to the growing demand for safety and quality of urban life coming from the citizens (Barbagli, 1998). The need for solutions to the citizenship's fear of crime, which was interpreted as increasing, was analysed in that period more in the field of crime prevention and community safety policies (adaptive strategies) than in the field of punitive approach and zero tolerance discourses (sovereign state strategies). The model was that of local "integrated" security policies, able to combine the different approaches of new prevention (situational, social and communitarian). In this sense, we can say that the Italian context introduced a left wing oriented model of the European local security policies. This was possible

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<sup>7</sup> Founded in 1991 as the post-communist evolution of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI, Italian Communist Party), it operated until 1998 as the main Italian social democrat party. Its political activities continued with the *Democratici di Sinistra* (Democrats of the Left) until 2007 and, from 2007 until now, with the *Partito Democratico* (Democratic Party).

due to the influence of the left realism from UK and the social prevention from France (Melossi and Selmini, 2009; Selmini, 1999; 2006).

The main difference with other national experiences preceding Italy in the introduction of local security policies, for example UK or France (where it was the national government to act as a stimulus to the local security policies), is therefore represented by the autonomous initiative at the local level. Specifically, the inclusion of the urban security issue in the Italian political agenda deals with the local governments' action. The electoral reform for the local governments that established the direct election of mayors by the citizens (Law 81/93) was fundamental for the development of local security policies. In Italy, the central government (the Ministry of Interior and the national criminal justice apparatus) is responsible for public security. Mayors began to ask for new powers and took action with the facilities already available to increase order, safety and decency in the city they administered. The peculiar use of the urban security policies in Italy, thus, is the conflict/negotiation process between local and national level of governance (Selmini, 2005)<sup>8</sup>.

The reading proposed by Braccesi (2004) to mark the stages of the development of urban security policies in Italy defined this stage as of substantial autonomy and involvement of local authorities, with new departments dedicated to security and spontaneous local initiatives ignored by the central government. A first institutionalization of this new local policy arena was made in 1994 by the Regional government of Emilia Romagna, an Italian Region with leftist tradition, which established the project of social prevention of crime and disorder named *Città Sicure* (Safe Cities) (Melossi and Selmini, 2009). The goal was to promote urban security policies in the region and produce studies and analysis, published in the magazine *Quaderni di Città Sicure*, a reference point in the national debate on the urban security issue.

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<sup>8</sup> The introduction of the urban security issue is part of the Italian process of decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity: the central authority should perform only those tasks that local levels cannot perform. This process has had its main step in the constitutional reform of 2001, where in art. 114 it was stated that local governments are not subordinated to the central State, and there is a multilevel cooperation based on the subsidiary principle. Different specific tasks regarding urban security were devolved to local powers, except for the jurisdiction on public security and order exercised by the central government. Regulatory developments in the field of local security in no way intended to change the principle of state responsibility in terms of public security (crime prevention and public order), as sanctioned by the Italian Constitution (Title V) Article 117, paragraph h. It regulates that [the State has exclusive legislative powers in the following matters] public order and security, with the exception of local administrative police. The regulatory field on urban security policies by local and territorial governments is strictly confined to the administrative local police and to increasing the quality of urban life. For the Italian system, urban security is a state responsibility, possibly in coordination with local authorities, when it refers to the integrity of the citizens (Mosca, 2012; Pajno, 2010a).

Some Italian local governments started to take part in the activities of the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)<sup>9</sup>. In 1996 in Rome under the initiative of the five municipalities and the Region of Emilia Romagna an Italian Forum for Urban Safety (FISU) was founded. Other regional governments created framework laws on urban security and economically supported the development of initiatives of local governments (Galantino and Ricotta, 2014; Musumeci, 2010), due also to the absence of a national regulation. As Selmini (2005: 311) argued, "the shift from 'public security' to 'local safety' has not been formalized in a national law implying a condition of uncertainty and ambiguity".

Concretely, during the 1990s, in this absence of regulatory and financial action from the central government (partially substituted by regional governments), Italian local governments experimented micro territorial policies. The interventions were, for example, the formal surveillance of the territory (with the involvement of the local police, or the collaboration between local and national police forces), the implementation of street furniture with deterrent function (fences, gates, barriers in general), CCTV surveillance, and increased lighting. In addition, the contrast of specific behaviours (e.g. street prostitution, begging) was implemented through administrative sanctions (Selmini, 2000; 2005). Ad-hoc social programs have also accompanied these practices (especially in local government administered by the centre-left coalitions) as for example, conflict mediation policies or social programs for specific segments of the population (education to legality projects, urban decor initiatives that involve the participation of citizens, victims support services, services for young people, services for immigrant people, etc.).

However, the adaptive strategy of these policies and the limited financial and institutional resources on which they could rely did not lead to a widespread "structural" local plan of prevention (Battistelli, 2016). With this concept, we refer to programs that work on the causes of insecurity in the cities, through projects of urban renewal, rehabilitation of degraded areas, substantial and durable programs of social inclusion and intercultural mediation.

In the late 1990s, the second stage of the rise of urban security policies in Italy (Braccesi, 2004) saw a temporary collaboration between local administrations and the

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<sup>9</sup> Established in 1987, the European Forum for Urban Safety, EFUS, is an international nongovernmental organization of municipalities and local authorities (with more than 300 members), which promotes discussions on crime and security policies, and cooperation in these areas of local governments. European and international organizations, such as the European Commission, the European Crime Prevention Network, the Council of Europe, UNHabitat, UNODC, UNDP, the World Bank and others, recognize its expertise.

central Government. In 1998 the *Protocolli di Intesa* (memoranda of understanding) between municipalities and prefectures were introduced. The first was signed in Modena in the presence of the Minister of the Interior. These *Protocolli* bound prefectures to agree with local governments on some activities, to share knowledge and information as well as to distribute responsibilities in terms of security. In 1999, the reform of the *Comitati provinciali per l'ordine e la sicurezza pubblica* (provincial committees for the order and the public security), envisaged the participation of the mayors of the provincial capitals, the presidents of the province and the mayors of small towns (in case of issues of specific relevance). The propulsive phase that characterized the end of the 1990s, however, failed to promote the institutionalization of the experiences of collaboration between the central and the local level in a complete regulatory framework and to implement integrated security policies.

The third stage (first half of 2000s), was judged by Braccesi as the failure of the cooperation between national and local levels. The debate on security followed two separate non-communicating strands. The local one, with the most advanced experiences in direct connection with other European experiences (but without legislative and economic instruments suitable for the purposes), and the national, centred on the deterrent nature of criminal law and the maximization of political consensus.

After 15 years of implementation of local security policies, as it was observed (Melossi and Selmini, 2009: 166): “we are now witnessing the failure of the primary idea based on a development of a new model of local government able to tackle ‘causes’ of crime while at the same time proving effective in managing criminal activities”. Actually, the prevalence of situational preventive policies was the counterpart of the weakness of their “primary social-inclusive rationality”. In this process, Italy followed the European trend towards a prevalence of situational preventive practices (Robert, 2009).

Starting from 2006, through the consolidation of rhetoric and practices of security much more based on punitive approaches both at local and at national level, we can define a fourth stage in the evolution of urban security policies in Italy. A stage characterized by the emerging of a connection between the emphasis on the local level of security and a punitive approach (populist in its discourses and measures). This stage was also related to the enlargement of the European Union to include Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and to the massive access to Italy of Romanian citizens (Pastore, 2007).

The mayors of some important Italian cities, renamed by mass media as “sheriff”, contributed to this shift to a punitive discourse. They increased the initiatives for tackling specific “annoying” behaviour of marginalized social groups, such as squeegee men at traffic lights, street prostitution and the Roma camps. In 2006 several cities, includ-

ing Florence, Bologna and Padua, embraced a zero tolerance approach (Ricotta, 2012). In 2007 several local powers displaced CCTV systems and armed the local police.

In 2007 the “march of Milan”, promoted by the centre-right wing mayor Letizia Moratti against the Romano Prodi government (centre-left coalition), to demand greater security for the city<sup>10</sup> had great political impact. In that same year, the Government promoted the *Patti per la Sicurezza* (Security Pacts). The Pacts represented a form of agreement between local powers, the Ministry of Interior and national and local police forces with the aim of enhancing security in the cities. These Pacts were almost exclusively aimed at a stronger coordination of the various national and local police forces. There were not effective measures for a participatory and integrated urban security policies (Della Ratta, Ioppolo, Ricotta, 2013).

The urban security issue emerged in November 2007 as the first priority of the national agenda in the aftermath of the homicide of a woman by a Romanian and Roma immigrant. The homicide occurred in Rome close to a train station. The “xenophobic interpretation” of this homicide (Boccia, 2008) was given by the mass media and by politicians. Veltroni, the centre-left wing mayor of Rome, asked to the central government for security interventions to tackle the safety emergency in the city. He declared that it was necessary to take special initiatives and introduce emergency legislation on security, so that Prefects would have been able to expel EU citizens who have committed crimes against property and people<sup>11</sup>. The centre-left government led by Romano Prodi urgently issued a law for the expulsion of immigrants from other EU countries for security reasons<sup>12</sup> (an example of acting-out policy, following Garland). The *pacchetto sicurezza* (a legislative package on security) was hardly discussed in the Government and in Parliament because of the struggle between the majority’s moderate component (that claimed tougher security policies to respond to the citizens fear of crime) and the leftist component (opposing to those policies and denouncing the xenophobic climate).

<sup>10</sup> The actual motivations of the mayor were, “The people of Milan that work and produce, welcoming people, now says, ‘it is enough!’. Stop to prostitution. Stop to drug dealing. Stop to violence against women. Stop to the illegal occupation of the streets, houses, buildings. Stop to robberies in shops and workshops. Stop to child maltreatment. Stop to the oppression by illegal immigrants. Stop to urban decay. Stop to the scams against elderly people” (our translation from Italian, *Corriere della Sera*, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007, *Criminalità. La marcia della Moratti contro il Governo*).

<sup>11</sup> *Repubblica*, October 31st, 2007, *Sicurezza, Veltroni contro la Romania. Per le espulsioni varato un decreto legge*.

<sup>12</sup> It is a decree for the expulsion by urgency of EU citizens and their family members, because of public security, that makes them incompatible with the ordinary civil cohabitation.

The electoral campaign for the 2008 elections were strongly centred on the security issue. Emotional argumentations on security led to an overwhelming victory of the right wing coalition. The PDL, the party led by Berlusconi, together with the *Lega Nord*, formed the majority of the national government while in Rome, Gianni Alemanno, the PDL candidate, became mayor, after 15 years of centre-left government<sup>13</sup>.

The IV national government led by Silvio Berlusconi (2008-2011) developed a combination of rhetoric and policies on security that marked recent political life in Italy. In 2008, the mayors of 20 cities in northern Italy, by different political majorities, gave birth to the *Carta di Parma* (Charta of Parma) on security, in the presence of the new Minister of the Interior, Roberto Maroni (*Lega Nord*). In this Charta, the mayors asked for the strengthening of the local powers on security, providing the option for the mayors to take measures relating to public order regarding minor offences, crimes and issues of physical and social degradation of the city.

The reform of Article 54 of the *Testo Unico degli Enti Locali* (consolidated law on local governments) seemed to meet this requirement and the rhetoric sustained by the right wing during the electoral campaign. The new legislation provided mayors with new powers on urban security. They became entitled to enforce *ordinanze* (administrative orders) in order to prevent and contrast the dangers related to public safety and "urban security". Through these *ordinanze* mayors could set administrative sanctions against specific behaviours without the need, as in the past, of the urgency and the contingency of the specific situation<sup>14</sup>.

Examples of the subject and specific behaviour to be sanctioned were prostitutes and their clients; illegal traders on the street; alcohol consumption in the city centre at night hours, etc.<sup>15</sup> The Minister of Interior Maroni<sup>16</sup>, on Ministerial Decree, August 5, 2008 Art. 1, defined urban security as follows: "a public good to be protected by activities that must defend, in local communities, the norms of civil life, to improve liveability in cities, cohabitation, social cohesion". Some examples were: a) the contrast and prevention of urban decay; b) vandalism; c) improper occupation of buildings or public

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<sup>13</sup> About the events that occurred in Rome in 2007 and the type of reaction that resulted in the political and media arena, see: Battistelli e Lucianetti, 2011; Galantino, 2010; Pastore, 2007; Ricotta, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Law 125/2008, urgent measures concerning public security (the so-called Security Package).

<sup>15</sup> In April 2011, the Italian Constitutional Court judged some parts of this measure unconstitutional. Specifically, the part that provides that the mayor, as the officials of the national government, can enact measures also in non-urgent and contingent situations.

<sup>16</sup> Soon after becoming Minister, Maroni went to New York to meet Giuliani: "I came to study Giuliani's model of urban security in New York, based on the zero tolerance concept, a model that we want to apply to every Italian city" (our translation from Italian, *La Repubblica*, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Maroni: "*Così importerò in Italia la tolleranza zero di New York*").



property; d) illegal commerce on the streets; e) begging and prostitution. As it was observed (Mosconi, 2010: 79), these provisions represented the repressive counterpart of the proposals previously presented as prevention methods.

Another intervention of the Berlusconi government on security was, in 2009 (law 94/2009), a new *pacchetto sicurezza*, where immigration was framed as a security problem (having as effect the criminalization of illegal immigrants). Non-EU immigrants that did not possess the necessary documents were treated as criminals: they could be fined and expelled from Italy and imprisoned if they did not respect the expulsion order. Italian scholars largely discussed the specific punishment attitude against immigrants in Italy (Ceretti and Cornelli, 2013; Melossi, 2003; 2010). For example, Ceretti and Cornelli (2013: 167) analysed by citizenship the number of imprisonments in Italy (1991-2012). They pointed out how “the spectacular rise in incarceration rates in the last two decades focused in Italy on a small segment of the population: young foreign males”<sup>17</sup>.

Other initiatives in the direction of punitiveness were, a) the organisation of un-armed vigilante patrols of citizens in the cities<sup>18</sup> (the so called “ronde”, a central point in the Lega Nord’s security rhetoric); b) the census of Roma people living in camps and the dismantling of their camps in Rome, Milan and Naples and other Italian cities<sup>19</sup>; c) the organisation of mixed patrols (made up of Carabinieri or Polizia di Stato, together with military staff) covering hotspots (train stations, embassies, immigrant detention centres, etc.)<sup>20</sup>.

The populist approach of some measures of the last Berlusconi government (2008-2011) can be read in the light of policies that Garland has called sovereign state strategies. Emergency related to urban fear was the common element justifying the measures taken at that time.

<sup>17</sup> Our translation from Italian.

<sup>18</sup> The Decree on Aug. 8, 2009 of the Ministry of Interior introduces the possibility for citizens to form associations of voluntary observers to report to the local police and the national police (by the inclusion on a provincial list established at the local prefecture) events that could adversely affect urban security or cause socially difficult situations.

<sup>19</sup> By a decree of the premier based on a law of 1992 on the special emergencies powers in case of natural disasters.

<sup>20</sup> The Operation *Strade Sicure* (Safe Streets)” (Law 125/2008) for the use of armed forces in patrolling and supervision of fixed points in several Italian cities. The last time that in Italy the military were used for security purposes was in 1992 - as a symbolic act against the Mafia attacks to the State. This time the main target is street-crime and the objective is that of reassuring citizens. The contingent increased in relation to specific mega-events such as the Expo in Milan (2015) and the Jubilee in Rome (2015-2016) and as a reaction to the terroristic threat after the massacre in Paris in January 2015 in the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Administrative orders, after the first implementation period of 2008 have gradually decreased (moving from 558 by-laws in 2008 to 157 in 2010), mostly meant to contrast prostitution and clients, alcohol consumption in the city centre at night hours and vandalism (Cittalia, 2009; Cittalia, 2014).

After a parenthesis due to the emerging of the financial crisis in Europe and in Italy<sup>21</sup> (and the premiership of the “technician” Mario Monti) security was again at the centre of the Italian debate, in relation with the immigration issue. Starting from 2013, due to conflicts in the Middle East and North African countries, the rise of the number of immigrants landing in Italy was exceptional (over 170.000 people in 2014, they were 13.245 in 2012). The right wing and the *Lega Nord* Party over all, promoted a new strong political campaign against the “invasion” of refugees and asylum-seekers, renewing the rhetoric of the immigrants as the major threat for the security of Italian citizens. Moreover, in November 2015, the second terrorist attack in one year in Paris, conducted by an ISIS unit, provided more arguments for the debate on security in Italian cities.

At the national level, the debate was focused on the way to deal with the growth of the number of migrant landings, labelled as a threat. At the local level, the issue of the conflictual presence of centres dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers emerged.

Local governments asked again more power on security. The last project of law of the actual Minister of Interior, Angelino Alfano, denominated *Norme sulla sicurezza urbana, per la legalità e la sicurezza dei territori* (Norms on urban security, for the legality and the safety of the territories) enunciated measures for the elimination of the factors of marginalization and social exclusion. The overlapping of social and criminal problems appeared as the main argument of this way of representing urban security. In a recent speech, Alfano treated the urban security mainly as a crime repression activity: “The next challenge will be urban security. We must engage in a strict fight and we do have a list of priorities: we will enact a law on urban security that will prevent robberies and thefts, Because about theft and robbery, we will have to change even more and be very hard”<sup>22</sup>.

Accordingly, the risk is – as has already been pointed out (Selmini, 2005: 314) – that “the ‘new’ prevention is simply providing a contribution to the establishment of a new and stronger infrastructure of crime, in which the administrative criminology of local

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<sup>21</sup> With a marked increase of the BTP-Bund spreads on financial markets and a substantial downgrade of Italian credit worthiness that kicked away the premiership of Silvio Berlusconi in 2011 in favour of Mario Monti.

<sup>22</sup> *Il Sole-24 ore*, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Alfano: *presto legge durissima contro ladri e rapinatori. In tre anni 350mila reati in meno* (our translation from Italian).

governments (unable to develop an autonomous way of affecting crime problems starting from an inclusive rationality) simply operates side by side with the traditional instruments of the criminal justice system”.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Italian urban security agenda, after the first period of local governments' spontaneous action, was highly politicized and often ideologically framed. In the 1990s, the activity of Italian mayors has been a laboratory for interesting experimentations, based on a social vision of the local crime prevention, but it has not evolved as a national practice for a new structured way of thinking the city governance in the face of contemporary challenges. Consequently, a new effective model for confronting urban conflicts in terms of social and structural solutions was not establish in the local policies' agenda.

Furthermore, in Italy, the lack of competence on security at the level of local powers, caused the alternation of adaptive micro local policies and national and local punitive practices. The city mayors deliberated *ordinanze* with administrative sanctions in order to fight against urban marginality, such as prostitution and begging. As it was observed (Crawford, 2009b: 8), “crime prevention and community safety can be simultaneously exclusionary and inclusionary, as well as both instrumental and moral” and the Italian approach to urban security policies was not an exception in regard to this ambiguity. As a consequence of the increasing budget cuts to the Italian local welfare systems, mayors choose symbolic punitive measures on security as an easy shortcut for citizens' approval in the absence of more substantial measures. This course of action represented a betrayal of the ideas expressed by the union of local authorities of EFUS, considering what was stated by the Zaragoza Manifesto of 2006: “Every strategy using fear is to be rejected in favour of policies furthering active citizenship, an appropriation of the city's territory and the development of collective life”. The risk of connecting urban security to the urban and social decorum and the identification of annoying behaviour (Pitch, 2001; 2013) bound together the mayors' requests for more power in the field of urban security and punitive and populist pressures of national governments, through specific legislative acts (Mosconi, 2010).

The spread of CCTV as an important adaptive preventive strategy is a symptom of a neoliberal and, at the same time, neoconservative approach. Following Norris and Macahill (2006), the development of public-private CCTV was a consequence of situational deterrence adopted as a preventive system. CCTV represent also a means for

punishing and a visible measure to show that something against crime has been done. The private market on security is, indeed, a strategic partner for adaptive local policies, and it is interesting to note that in 2011, in the midst of the economic crisis, the security sector in the Italian market recorded a growth of 4.9% over the previous year (growth continued until 2014 and was expected to be confirmed for 2015)<sup>23</sup>.

Following the critical interpretations on new punitiveness (Wacquant, 1999) as a response to the crisis of the welfare system, populist government measures can be read as the other face of the absence of the regulatory power of the state in contemporary society. This process moves towards socio-economic exclusion, which in Italy is consistently affecting immigrants. This is not to say that in Italy there has been a general shift towards punitiveness. In the analysed period there was an amnesty (2006), and the penal welfare system in Italy continues to operate in response to rules designed for social inclusion of the recluses (i.e. the inclusive approach towards minors; see Nelken, 2005).

Moreover, in the case of urban security policies in Italy, the neoliberal and adaptive approach can be traced to the residual nature of the so-called new local prevention policies. The residual and temporary nature of security local policies undermines the effectiveness of inclusion, even in relation to the decreased spending capacity of the local governments. An effective policy strategy to the construction of safe cities as inclusive places recalls the urgency of structural prevention models for the contemporary city and it requires public investment and a new capacity of public local governance (political and economic) in prevention policies. However, these features by defying the neoliberal approach bring to mind the necessity of a critical rethinking of contemporary trends of urban governance.

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<sup>23</sup> *CorrierEconomia (Corriere della Sera)*, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, *Sicurezza. La ripresa abita qui. Fatturati in crescita del 4%*.

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