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WOULD YOU TRUST AN ITALIAN POLITICIAN?
PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE FROM ITALIAN REGIONAL POLITICS

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WOULD YOU TRUST AN ITALIAN POLITICIAN?

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE FROM ITALIAN REGIONAL POLITICS[*]

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper sheds light on the accountability of the "Governors" of the Italian Regions and how it gets eroded in the practice of politics. We use content analysis to assess the distribution of the "programmatic speeches" of the Governors along two dimensions: one political (the left-right dimension), another economic, the dependency from transfers from the central government, which reflects the differences in the level of development within the country that constitute one of the *raisons d'être* of the regional governments. We analyze how this distribution is correlated with the electoral results, to test the hypothesis that a higher positive and significant correlation indicates greater electoral accountability. We then examine the content of the first important policy documents of the Regional governments, the long-term regional budget (DPEFR), to check how the distribution of the scores correlates with those of the programmatic speeches and of the electoral results. These analyses detect a noticeable erosion of electoral accountability from the stage of the programmatic speeches to that of the DPEFR.

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1. Goals of the analysis

…you probably wouldn't, would you?

In this paper we try to give some empirical evidence to this widespread *a priori*. Specifically, we examine the electoral results, the programmatic speeches and the long-term budget documents (*Documento di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria Regionale*, DPEFR) of the Presidents of the Italian Regions (usually and heretofore called "Governors") and verify the degree of consistency among them. The greater this consistency, the greater the accountability of the Governors.

Before describing the analysis, four clarifications are in order; the first is about our working definition of accountability, the second about the methods and the strategy of the analysis, the third about the selection of the sample, the fourth about the data.

In this paper, accountability is defined as the absence of slack in the principal-agent relationship between voters and their representatives, in this case, the Governors. This is not exactly the standard definition of accountability that, according to the *Dictionary of Politics* (Scruton, 1996) is thee obligation to bear the consequences for failure to perform as expected. Our working definition coincides with the standard one under the hypothesis that elected officials (the agents) expect to be voted out of office when they do not satisfy the preferences of the majority of the voters (the principals). Two reasons make this hypothesis look plausible for Italian regional politics. First, alternation of governing coalitions has been an actual possibility in regional elections since the establishment of the Regions in the 1970s, well before that similar patterns of replacement occurred at the level of national politics. Regional politicians have always known that they were not sitting on the same political rent that national politicians enjoyed for such a long time (Putnam, 1993). Second, the 1995 reform of the institutions of Regional Governments introduced a majority premium for the winning coalition that a) greatly increased government stability and b) lowered the cost of voting against the incumbent, by eliminating the risk of having a weak and unstable

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government. Both effects seem to have further stimulated alternation in government (Veronese, 2007).

The strategy of the analysis aims at uncovering a process of erosion of accountability in the practice of politics. We compare three important moments of regional politics, which are usually included in a six month time span: 1) the electoral results; 2) the programmatic speeches of the Governor before the Regional Council (the regional legislature) during the confidence debate; 3) the first long term budget document signed by the Governor. The first moment can be taken as the expression of voters' preferences; the second constitutes the first verbal reaction of the elected Governor to these preferences; the third is the first important political choice of the standing government. Information about these three moments has been gathered for the two regional legislatures that followed the 1995 institutional reform. The available observations for the Italian Regions are then distributed on a left to right political dimension. The method of distribution is based on expert evaluations for the electoral results; for the programmatic speeches and the long-term budget documents we have used the methodology of content analysis described in Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003). We thus obtain three left to right distributions of the Regions, one for each moment. The extent to which the Regions keep their relative positions in these three moments is interpreted as a sign of accountability of the Governors. The idea is that, in such a case, Governors reflect in their programmatic speeches of the confidence debate the preferences that voters expressed in the elections, and start to program policies, reported by the long-term budget documents, consistent both with the programmatic speeches and with voters' preferences. Conversely, the more Regions change positions in the three moments, the greater the erosion of electoral accountability in the practice of politics.

To dispose of an alternative dimension to explain possible position changes, we evaluate the Regions also on an economic dimension, based on their dependence on grants from the Central Government. This dimension captures an important conditioning factor for the possibility of the

Governors to keep their electoral promises (and a usual excuse for failing to do so), namely, the availability of financial resources transferred by the Central Government. This is potentially a very important constraint, as the Italian Regions derive, on average, more than 50% of their total revenues from transfer programs from the Central Government, with a considerable variance around the mean (Brosio, Maggi and Piperno, 2003). Moreover, as these transfer programs are by and large negatively correlated with regional income levels, this dimension reflects also the economic conditions in which Regional governments operate. Thus, the economic dimension is correlated with the two main constraints on the Governors' possibility to act according to voters' preferences: the decision of the Central Government and the economic conditions of the Region itself. We analyze the content of the programmatic speeches using the most and least grant-dependent Region as reference points and then verify the correlation among the three moments along this new dimension, to check whether it helps explaining the erosion of accountability along the political dimension.

Three reasons motivate our choice of the Italian Regions as the sample for this analysis. First, content analysis has never been applied to Italian regional politics so far. The only applications of this approach to Italian data that we are aware of is Giannetti et al. (2001), to the policy positions of Italian national parties. The second reason is data availability. As we shall see below, this is not abundant, yet its panel structure allows enough degrees of freedom to perform a "Do They Walk Like They Talk?" type of inquiry. Finally, we are interested in verifying whether there is any evidence supporting Putnam's (1993) claims that Italian regional politics is more "responsive". i.e., accountable, than the national one, and that the level of accountability is higher in Northern Regions than in Southern ones.

It would be of course optimal to follow the process of the erosion of accountability from the Alpha to the Omega, i.e., from the moment when electoral promises are made, the publication of the electoral manifestos of the candidates to the Governorship, to the results of political choices, as they

may be gathered by the level of expenditures in certain regional programs (mainly health care, social services, transportation and the like). Information about the very first and last moments is unfortunately missing in the case of Italian regional politics. On the one hand, only a few candidates publish an electoral manifesto, too few for statistical analysis. On the other hand, the elections that inaugurated the second legislature took place around the years 2005-2006; it is still too early to have data about regional expenditures for that legislature.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly describes the politics and the institutional context of the Italian Regions. In section 3 we explain the methodology employed to evaluate the policy positions of the Governors. Section 4 includes the content analysis of the Governors' programmatic speeches and long-term budget documents. Section 5 exploits this information to assess a) to what extent the accountability of the Governors is eroded in the time span stemming from the elections, the elected Governor's programmatic speech and the elaboration of the long-term budget document, and b) to analyze how this erosion evolves in time and as we move from one area of the country to another. In the final section we reassume the main results of the analysis and point out the avenues for future research.

2. A brief description of the Italian regional politics

The Italian Constitution, promulgated in 1948, foresees the principle of decentralization of the government functions and the establishment of Regional Governments (Article 5 and Title V of the Constitution). Italy has thus been divided in 20 Regions (see appendix B for the list of names and abbreviations). Five of them, the first to be established between 1948 and 1963, enjoy a special statute (*Regioni a Statuto Speciale*, or RSS), because of their multilingual status, borderline position or particularly low level of development. The remaining 15 Regions characterized by an "ordinary statute" (*Regioni a Statuto Ordinario*, or RSO) were established in 1970, 22 years after the Constitutional provision. Many Italian constitutional lawyers and political scientists (Lepschy,

1990; Putnam, 1993; Brosio, Maggi and Piperno, 2003) argue that the creation of the regional governments in 1970s constituted a response to the stalemate in national politics, where the Communist Party, which represented more than 1/3 of the electorate, could not participate in government activities because of its incompatibility with the Italian set of alliances. Regional governments could provide Communist politicians with a chance to govern certain areas of the country without interfering with foreign policy; at the same time the experience of administrating regional governments could make Italian politics less extremist, or, according to Putnam (1993), less ideology and more administration oriented.

According to the Constitution, Regional Governments have the major responsibility of health care, plus certain aspects of social services, environment, local transportation, housing culture and tourism. The difference between the RSO and RSS lies chiefly in the provision of grants from the Central Government, which is much more generous for the RSS (Brosio, Maggi and Piperno, 2003).

Until the early 1990s the institutional framework and the politics of the RSO largely replicated those of the National Government, being based on proportional representation and on a parliamentary system. This created a lack of accountability and a general dissatisfaction with the quality of regional politics. In 1995 a reform was introduced that effectively made the regional system of government a presidential one. Government stability was guaranteed by a robust majority premium (60% of the seats) and a system of penalties attached to motions of no confidence (Veronese, 2007).

This reform considerably affected the ways and mores of Italian regional politics. Alternation in government, already present, significantly increased in the two elections held under the new institutional system. In the last electoral round, 5 regions out of 20 (Calabria, Lazio, Piemonte, Puglia and Sardegna) swung from the center-right to the center-left coalition, a remarkable shift given the traditional stability of Italian politics. The direct election of the Governor also prompted the adoption of new practices usually featured in accountable systems of government, like the

publishing of electoral programs (although still by some candidates); the deliverance, by the Governor, of a programmatic speech before the Regional Council in coincidence of the first confidence debate (that marks the investiture of the Regional Government); the adoption of long term budget documents; as well as other initiatives in the same vein. The present analysis exploits some of these innovations.

3. Methodology

To evaluate the policy position of the Governors of the Regions at the stage of their programmatic speeches and of the approval of the first DPEFRs of the legislature we adopt the *a priori* methodology of Laver, Benoit, Garry (2003). This methodology is based on a comparison of two sets of political texts: one, the so-called "reference texts", is constituted by texts whose policy positions on well-defined, *a priori* policy dimensions are known to and chosen by the analyst; the second, the so-called "virgin texts", is composed by texts whose policy positions must be found out. Specifically, this methodology uses the relative frequency for each of the different words in each of the reference texts to calculate the probability of reading a particular reference text given that a particular word is found in the virgin text. For a specific *a priori* policy dimension, which the analyst chooses by selecting the reference texts in ways that we shall describe below, this procedure generates a numerical score for each word. The sum of the word scores is the expected policy position of any virgin text in the policy dimension spanned by the reference texts. In the case a virgin text is identical to a reference text, the word score is at the maximum value, because the probability of reading the same text is equal to 1. The less similar the virgin text is to the reference text, the lower will be the score.

In other words, the word scores generated from the reference texts are used to estimate the positions the virgin texts on the policy dimension in which the analyst is interested. Each word in a virgin text provides a small amount of information about which of the reference texts the virgin text

most closely resembles. This produces a conditional expectation of the virgin text's policy position and each scored word in a virgin text adds to this information. This procedure can be though of as a type of Bayesian reading of the virgin text with the estimates of the policy position of the any given virgin text being updated each time one reads a word that is also found in one of the reference texts. The more scored words are read, the more confident one becomes with the estimates.

The selection of an appropriate set of reference texts is clearly a crucial aspect of this *a priori* approach. As Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003) point out, "…the hard and fast rule when selecting reference texts is that we must have access to confident estimates of, or assumptions about, their position on the policy dimension under investigation" (p. 314). Additionally, Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003) offer three further guidelines in the selection of reference texts:

1) They should use the same lexicon, in the same context, as the virgin text being analyzed; for example, party manifestos should not be considered as appropriate reference texts for analyzing legislative speeches.

2) The policy position of the reference texts should span the dimension in which the analyst is interested; ideally, they should occupy extreme positions of the dimension under investigation.

3) The set of reference texts should contain as many different words as possible. The more comprehensive this word universe, and thus the less often one finds words in virgin texts that do not appear in any reference text, the better. Reference texts should then be both long documents; documents of unequal length create statistical problems, inasmuch as they reduce the possibility to make confident inferences about the policy positions of virgin texts.

4. Content analysis

Data availability is, at the same time, an innovative aspect of and a constraint for this inquiry. As the first systematic analysis of the speeches of the Governors of the Italian Regions to adopt the "Do They Walk Like They Talk?" approach, the gathering of the data set constitutes per se an innovative aspect of the inquiry[1]. On the other hand, several circumstances have limited the extension of the data set. First, we could not examine electoral manifestos because in fact only a few candidates to the Governorship published such documents. We then focused our attention on the programmatic speeches that the elected Governors deliver before the Regional Council upon the investiture of the regional government. We have collected a total of 29 inaugural speeches (out of a maximum possible of 40) delivered at the beginning of the 7th and 8th Regional Legislatures, the two that followed the 1995 institutional reform. The remaining 11 speeches were either not delivered, or have not been recorded. All in all, we have scored the speeches for Abruzzo (8th legislature), Basilicata (7th and 8th), Calabria (7th and 8th), Campania (8th), Emilia Romagna (7th and 8th), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (7th), Lazio (7th and 8th), Liguria (7th), Lombardia (8th), Marche (7th and 8th), Molise (8th), Piemonte (7th and 8th), Puglia (8th), Sardegna (8th), Sicilia (7th), Trentino Alto-Adige (8th), Toscana (7th and 8th), Umbria (7th), Valle d'Aosta (7th and 8th), Veneto (7th and 8th)[2].

Information about the DPEFRs is even more limited, because not all Regional Governments publish these documents and we need only those of the Regions for which we have the programmatic speeches too. This makes for only 19 DPEFRs, namely, Abruzzo (8th legislature), Basilicata (7th), Campania (8th), Emilia Romagna (7th and 8th), Lazio (7th and 8th), Lombardia (8th), Marche (8th), Molise (8th), Piemonte (8th), Sardegna (8th), Sicilia (7th), Trentino Alto-Adige (8th), Toscana (7th and 8th), Umbria (7th), Veneto (7th and 8th). All of the DPEFRs were the first

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[1] See Appendix A for the illustration of the data sources.
[2] For one legislature of Sardegna and Emilia Romagna we have actually used the electoral program and not the programmatic speech, because instead the programmatic speech was in fact a repetition of the electoral program.

ones published by the elected Regional Government, in order to make the temporal distance between the three moments as tight as possible.

In the selection of the reference texts we have followed the suggestions of Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003) as closely as possible. As for the left-to-right political dimension, we have used the electoral results as *a priori*. The Regions where the center-left (*Ulivo*) and center-right (*Polo delle Libertà*) coalitions received the highest share of votes were chosen to represent the reference texts of the programmatic speeches and of the DPEFRs of the Governors. The selection, however, was made under two constraints: one is the availability of the texts of the speeches and of the DPEFRs; the other is the length requirement of the documents, as in guideline 3). The programmatic speeches of the Governors of Basilicata (8th legislature), elected with a strong center-left majority of votes, and of Sicilia (7th legislature), elected with a strong center-right majority, are the reference texts. They are given the values of –1 and + 1, respectively. The same criterion (and associated constraints) has been applied to the selection of the reference texts for the DPEFRs, also ordered along a left-to-right political dimension. In this case, the DPEFRs of Piemonte (8th legislature, center-left) and Sicily (7th, center-right) are the reference texts, with an assigned score of –1 and +1. Finally, the economic dimension is spanned by the Regions that receive the highest and lowest percentage of revenues from transfers from the Central Government, namely, Marche (7th legislature, lowest percentage, assigned score –1) and Molise (8th legislature, highest percentage, assigned score +1).

Table 1 reports the percentage of votes of the winning coalitions of the regional elections for the legislatures under consideration, using the standard left-to-right dimension. Table 2 illustrates the results of the content analysis for the political dimension of the programmatic speeches; Table 3 those related to the economic dimension; finally, Table 4 contains the information about the content analysis of the DPEFRs.

Table 1. Results of regional elections

Region	2000		2005	
	Centre-left	Centre-right	Centre-left	Centre-right
Abruzzo		49.26	57.8	
Basilicata	63.0		67.0	
Calabria		49.8	59.0	
Campania	54.18		61.6	
Emilia Romagna	54.1		62.7	
Friuli Venezia Giulia.		52.0[*]		53.17[***]
Liguria		50.1	52.64	
Lombardia		62.37		53.4
Lazio		51.5	50.7	
Marche	49.1		57.7	
Molise		58.0		54.0[*****]
Piemonte		51.8	50.9	
Puglia		54.0	49.7	
Sardegna		43[**]	50.2[****]	
Sicilia		59.1[****]		53.08
Toscana	48.7		56.7	
Umbria	55.7		63.01	
Veneto		55.0		55.0

Electoral results for Valle d'Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige are not reported because the elected local parties do not follow the usual left-right spectrum of Italian politics.

NOTES
[*] Elections held in 1998.
[**] Elections held in 1999.
[***] Elections held in 2003.
[****] Elections held in 2001.
[****] Elections held in 2004.
[*****] Elections held in 2006.

Table 2. Word scoring of the programmatic speeches, political dimension
Reference texts: BAS 8 (-1) and SIC 7 (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw Standard Error	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Error	Transformed 95% Confidence Intervals		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words Scored
1	ABR 8	0,06	0,01	1.076	3,61	0,30	3,00	4,22	5.918	84,3
2	BAS 7	-0,05	0,00	2.446	-2,39	0,20	-2,80	-1,98	13.273	88,9
3	CAL 7	0,00	0,01	743	0,05	0,51	-0,98	1,07	1.945	85,5
4	CAL 8	-0,01	0,01	965	-0,28	0,43	-1,13	0,58	2.992	86,6
5	CAM 8	0,01	0,01	604	0,61	0,50	-0,40	1,62	1.934	90,6
6	ERO 7	-0,01	0,01	1.192	-0,22	0,31	-0,85	0,40	4.844	88,9
7	ERO 8	-0,02	0,01	1.422	-0,90	0,28	-1,46	-0,35	6.173	90,5
8	FVG 7	-0,01	0,00	1.467	-0,59	0,26	-1,12	-0,07	6.645	86,1
9	LAZ 7	0,04	0,01	1.424	2,27	0,30	1,66	2,87	5.866	84,5
10	LAZ 8	0,04	0,01	710	2,15	0,51	1,13	3,17	2.058	88,2
11	LIG 7	0,00	0,00	1.997	0,40	0,22	-0,04	0,84	11.372	87,9
12	LOM 8	0,01	0,01	834	0,59	0,43	-0,27	1,46	2.808	90,1
13	MAR 7	0,02	0,01	1.040	1,01	0,33	0,35	1,67	4.347	87,7
14	MAR 8	-0,04	0,01	1.336	-2,05	0,27	-2,59	-1,50	5.964	88,1
15	MOL 8	-0,03	0,00	2.068	-1,28	0,24	-1,75	-0,80	9.234	86,9
16	PIE 7	0,03	0,01	1.250	1,54	0,34	0,86	2,21	4.848	85,9
17	PIE 8	-0,02	0,01	854	-0,76	0,41	-1,57	0,06	2.779	88,2
18	PUG 8	-0,03	0,00	2.474	-1,69	0,19	-2,07	-1,31	14.373	87,8
19	SAR 8	-0,02	0,00	3.275	-0,94	0,13	-1,19	-0,69	31.179	87,9
20	TAA 8	-0,01	0,01	1.259	-0,29	0,32	-0,92	0,35	5.133	86,9
21	TOS 7	0,00	0,01	994	0,12	0,38	-0,64	0,87	3.690	86,5
22	TOS 8	-0,01	0,01	888	-0,31	0,40	-1,10	0,49	3.400	89,3
23	UMB 7	0,01	0,01	1.460	0,91	0,29	0,34	1,49	6.287	89,1
24	VDA 7	-0,04	0,01	882	-1,90	0,41	-2,71	-1,08	2.876	90,7
25	VDA 8	-0,03	0,01	578	-1,27	0,55	-2,38	-0,16	1.549	88,1
26	VEN 7	0,00	0,01	950	0,31	0,43	-0,54	1,17	2.942	89
27	VEN 8	0,02	0,01	1.062	1,21	0,38	0,45	1,98	3.626	85,6

Table 3. Word scoring of the programmatic speeches, economic dimension
Reference texts: MAR 7 (-1) and MOL 8 (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw Standard Error	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Error	Transformed 95% Confidence Intervals		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words Scored
1	ABR 8	-0,05	0,01	812	-3,12	0,20	-3,53	-2,72	5.497	78,3
2	BAS 7	0,11	0,00	1.658	1,57	0,14	1,30	1,85	11.913	79,8
3	BAS 8	0,12	0,00	1.897	2,03	0,11	1,80	2,25	18.244	80,7
4	CAL 7	0,09	0,01	594	0,94	0,36	0,22	1,66	1.770	77,8
5	CAL 8	0,08	0,01	767	0,81	0,29	0,23	1,40	2.745	79,4
6	CAM 8	0,06	0,01	491	0,28	0,37	-0,46	1,01	1.759	82,4
7	ERO 7	0,00	0,01	965	-1,67	0,22	-2,11	-1,22	4.572	83,9
8	ERO 8	0,05	0,01	1.086	-0,14	0,20	-0,54	0,27	5.672	83,1
9	FVG 7	0,09	0,01	1.157	0,94	0,19	0,56	1,32	6.235	80,8
10	LAZ 7	0,04	0,01	1.085	-0,39	0,21	-0,81	0,03	5.377	77,5
11	LAZ 8	0,04	0,01	589	-0,49	0,35	-1,19	0,21	1.906	81,7
12	LIG 7	0,05	0,01	1.487	-0,07	0,15	-0,38	0,24	10.528	81,4
13	LOM 8	0,04	0,01	683	-0,41	0,29	-0,99	0,18	2.611	83,8
14	MAR 8	0,06	0,01	1.089	0,19	0,20	-0,21	0,58	5.697	84,2
15	PIE 7	0,04	0,01	963	-0,39	0,23	-0,86	0,07	4.465	79,1
16	PIE 8	0,03	0,01	720	-0,61	0,30	-1,21	-0,02	2.622	83,2
17	PUG 8	0,11	0,00	1.678	1,61	0,13	1,35	1,87	12.952	79,1
18	SAR 8	0,10	0,00	2.173	1,51	0,09	1,33	1,69	28.494	80,3
19	SIC 7	0,06	0,01	991	0,08	0,24	-0,39	0,56	4.267	79,2
20	TAA 8	0,06	0,01	971	0,17	0,23	-0,28	0,63	4.641	78,6
21	TOS 7	0,01	0,01	833	-1,42	0,27	-1,95	-0,88	3.480	81,6
22	TOS 8	-0,04	0,01	718	-2,78	0,27	-3,32	-2,24	3.182	83,5
23	UMB 7	0,05	0,01	1.134	-0,14	0,20	-0,54	0,26	5.832	82,6
24	VDA 7	0,18	0,01	718	3,72	0,29	3,13	4,31	2.634	83,0
25	VDA 8	0,06	0,01	489	0,32	0,40	-0,48	1,12	1.440	81,9
26	VEN 7	0,05	0,01	764	-0,23	0,29	-0,82	0,36	2.711	82,0
27	VEN 8	0,03	0,01	822	-0,80	0,27	-1,34	-0,27	3.311	78,1

Table 4. Word scoring of the DPEFRs, political dimension
Reference texts: PIE 8 (-1) and SIC 7 (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw SE	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Errors	Transformed 95% Confidence Interval		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words scored
1	ABR 8	-0,05	0,00	5289,00	-0,16	0,03	-0,21	-0,11	72963,00	92,70
2	BAS 7	-0,10	0,01	1498,00	-0,98	0,08	-1,15	-0,81	5678,00	85,20
3	CAM 8	-0,03	0,00	3016,00	0,13	0,05	0,03	0,23	21139,00	92,40
4	ERO 7	-0,06	0,00	4956,00	-0,40	0,03	-0,45	-0,34	57231,00	88,90
5	ERO 8	-0,10	0,00	3681,00	-0,94	0,04	-1,02	-0,87	28704,00	92,00
6	LAZ 7	-0,03	0,00	5116,00	0,15	0,02	0,10	0,19	74701,00	86,80
7	LAZ 8	0,27	0,00	4429,00	4,86	0,03	4,79	4,92	70181,00	90,30
8	LOM 8	-0,13	0,00	3829,00	-1,46	0,03	-1,51	-1,40	49171,00	88,60
9	MAR 8	-0,04	0,00	5500,00	0,03	0,02	-0,02	0,08	79970,00	90,00
10	MOL 8	0,00	0,00	3580,00	0,55	0,04	0,46	0,63	27164,00	90,20
11	SAR 8	-0,01	0,00	5389,00	0,39	0,03	0,34	0,44	76958,00	90,50
12	SIC 8	-0,08	0,01	1118,00	-0,63	0,11	-0,84	-0,42	3875,00	89,60
13	TOS 7	-0,11	0,00	2852,00	-1,25	0,04	-1,33	-1,16	20405,00	91,90
14	TOS 8	-0,12	0,00	3298,00	-1,27	0,04	-1,35	-1,19	24591,00	94,02
15	UMB 7	-0,01	0,00	5073,00	0,38	0,03	0,33	0,43	70031,00	89,60
16	VEN 7	-0,05	0,00	6389,00	-0,25	0,02	-0,28	-0,21	157386,00	89,50
17	VEN 8	-0,03	0,00	6637,00	0,18	0,02	0,15	0,22	177195,00	88,70

5. Evaluation of political accountability

The application of the methodology of Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003) to the programmatic speeches of the Governors of the Italian Regions seems to give satisfactory results. The estimates are quite precise, as all transformed scores fall within the 95% confidence bands, and most appear to be even more statistically significant[3]. The comparison between Table 1 and the column of the transformed scores in Table 2 shows that twenty-three "virgin" speeches out of twenty-seven are consistent with the electoral results. Quite significantly, of the six Regions that underwent a relevant change of electoral results between the two legislatures, five are correctly reflected in the evolution of the transformed scores. The methodology of content analysis of the speeches captures the right to left swing of Calabria and Piemonte, as well as the movements further to the left of the electorate of Toscana, Marche and Emilia Romagna. Lazio, instead, underwent a swing from a centre-right to a centre-left coalition that is not reflected in the transformed scores. The scores are also consistent with the electoral results of Basilicata 7, Friuli 7, Liguria 7, Lombardia 8, Puglia 8, Sardegna 8, Veneto 7 and 8. Also for Val d'Aosta 7 and 8 and for Trentino 8, the two Regions where the local parties are not immediately identifiable with the national ones, the transformed scores are in line with the political orientation of the local parties. Finally, in the cases of Abruzzo 8, Campania 8, Molise 8 and Umbria 7 the electoral results do not find correspondence in the evaluation of the speeches. Yet, it must be kept in mind that these four cases may reflect a genuine movement of the Governor away from the political orientation of his (or her, in the case of Umbria) electorate.

Moving to the word scoring of the speeches along the economic dimension, two results emerge starkly. First, the transformed scored are entirely consistent with the rankings of the Regions based on the grants received from the Central Government. All speeches of

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[3] Unfortunately, the word score program yields the critical values only for the 95% confidence interval, so we had to evaluate the difference of the transformed scores to the average of the critical values to see if they were even more statistically significant.

Governors of Regions highly dependent on grants show a positive transformed score, i.e., they are closer to the speech taken as reference for the grant-depending Regions, Molise 8 (assigned score +1). Conversely, all the negative scores refer to Regions that are positioned in the bottom half of the ranking for dependency on grants. All scores are again statistically significant at the 5% level. Second, along this dimension we do not observe any switch from a positive to a negative sign (or vice versa), even in cases of Regions that underwent a swing in the electoral results. This is consistent with the high resilience of the economic conditions of the Italian Regions.

Figure 1 plots the transformed scores of the Regions for the left-to-right political dimension (horizontal axis) and the economic dimension (vertical axis). It reveals a negative correlation between the transformed scores of the political and those of the economic dimension. The negative sign does not mean that the two dimensions are substitutes; rather, it can be interpreted as support for our hypothesis that the economic dimension acts as a constraint to the political dimension. Moreover, the two dimensions are clearly not multicollinear, so they can be meaningfully used together for purposes of statistical inference.

Finally, also the transformed scores assigned to the DPEFR expose a departure from the electoral results. Of the seventeen DPEFRs scored, nine do not coincide with the political orientation expressed by voters: Abruzzo 8, Lazio 8, Lombardia 8, Marche 8, Molise 8, Sardegna 8, Sicilia 7, Umbria 7, and Veneto 8. It seems that, once the financial needs must be confronted, the ideological positions of the Governors loose relevance or, at least, diminish in intensity. Once more, the transformed scores are all statistically significant at the 5% level.

Figure 1. Political and Economic Dimensions
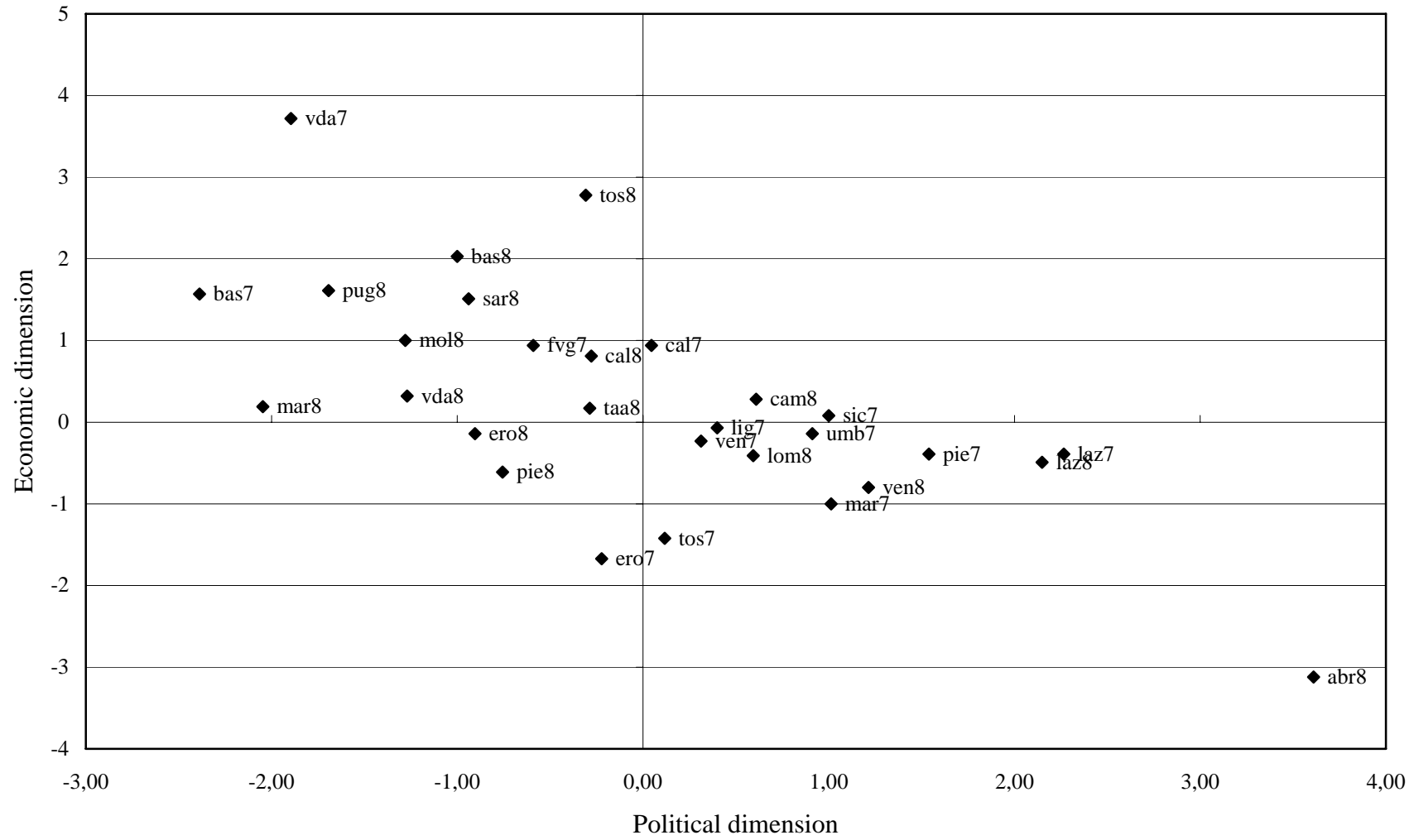
In order to provide a quantitative assessment of the loss of accountability of the Governors as the political act moves from the electoral results to the establishment of the government and to the programming of policies, we resort to a Spearman correlation index of the rankings of the Regions in the three moments considered. The number of observations does not allow enough degrees of freedom to perform regression analysis.

The ranking of the Regions according to the electoral results was obtained by assigning negative values to the percentage of votes obtained by centre-left coalitions, so to obtain a left-to-right scaling of the Regions comparable to those of the transformed scores of the speeches and of the DPEFRs. The value for the Spearman index correlating the rankings of the electoral results and of the transformed scores of the programmatic speeches along the political dimension is –0.437 (p value = 0.052). The value of the Spearman index between the speeches (political dimension) and the DPEFRs (political dimension) is 0.326 (p value = 0.087). Finally, value of the Spearman index between the speeches (economic dimension) and the DPEFRs (political dimension) is 0.2246 (p value = 0.178).

The comparison of the values of these indexes shows that the greater loss of political accountability of the Governors takes place moving from the stage of the electoral results to that of the programmatic speeches. Some erosion, however, appears also in the passage between the stage of the speeches and that of the DPEFR. In this passage, however, ideological differences seem to become less relevant. The economic dimension seem to explain little of this progressive erosion, since the absolute value of the Spearman index correlating the economic evaluation of the speeches and the DPEFRs is lower to that of the political evaluation (0.2246 vs. 0.437) and is not significant. The scatter diagrams of Figure 2-4 confirm the results of the Spearman index and provide a more intuitive illustration of the correlations.
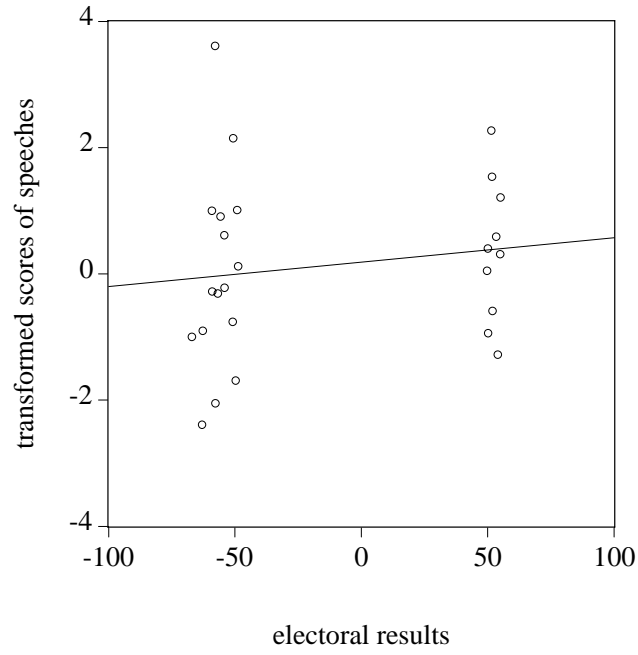
Figure 2. Scatter diagram, elections and speeches

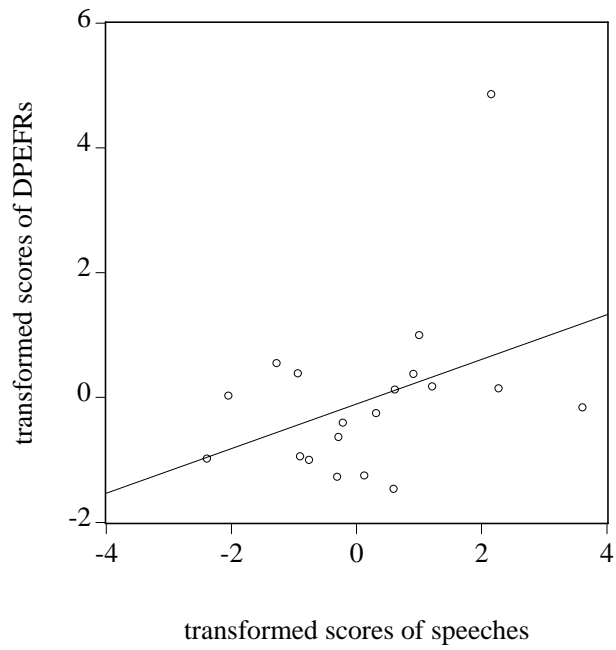**Figure 3. Scatter diagram, speeches (political dimension) and DPEFRs**

Figure 4. Scatter diagram, speeches (economic dimension) and DPEFR

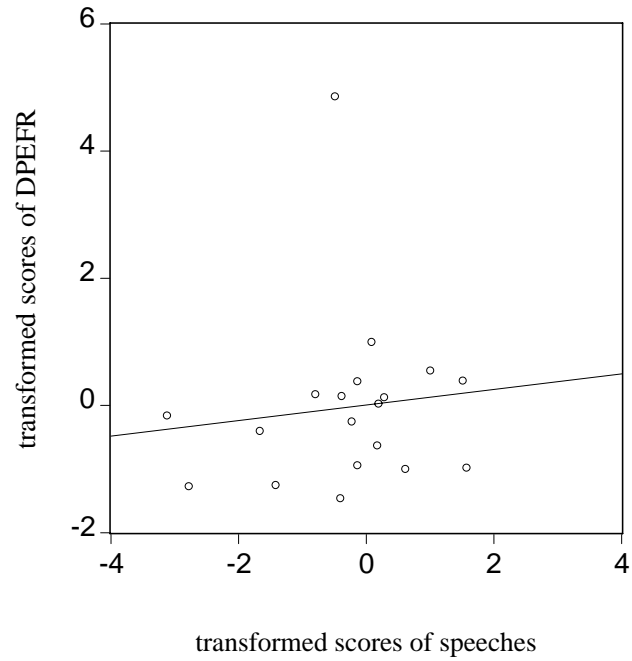

transformed scores of speeches
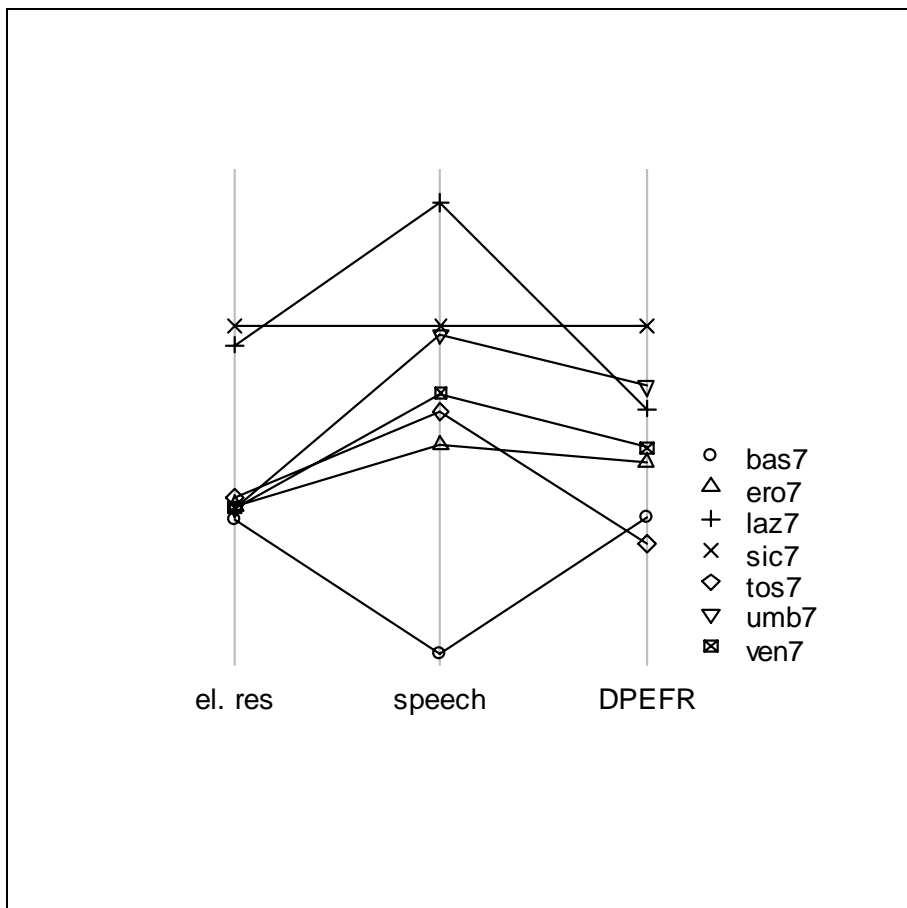
Figure 5. Accountability, Legislature 7

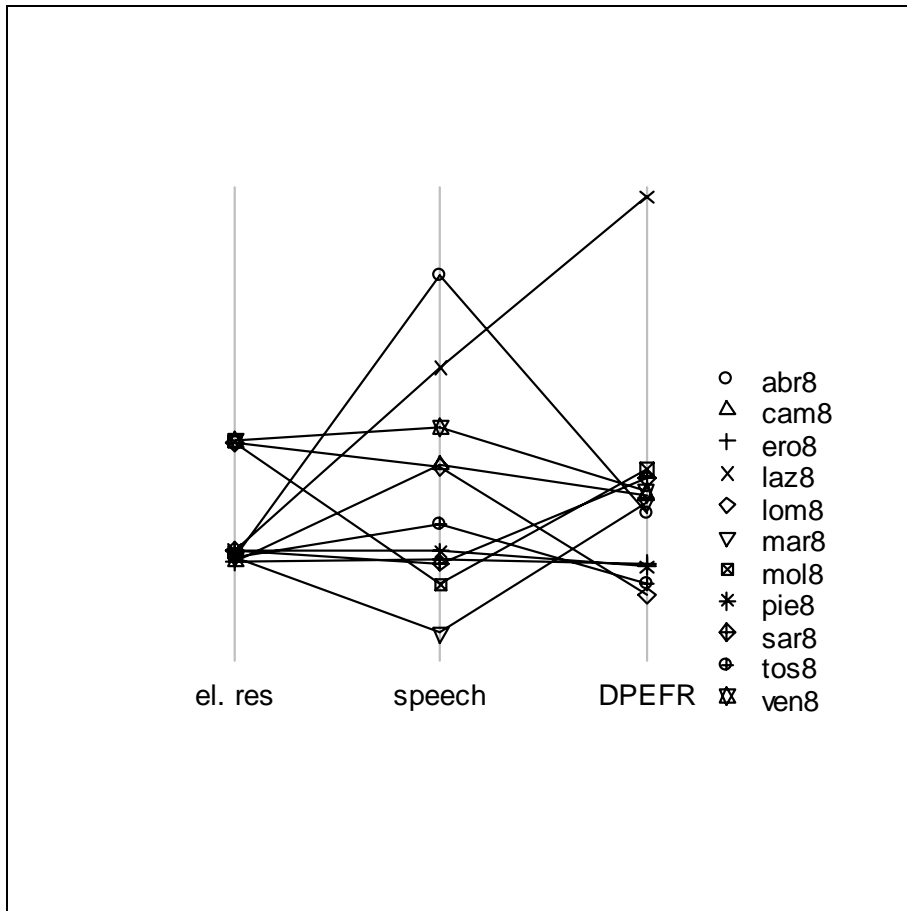**Figure 6. Accountability, Legislature 8**

Figure 5 and 6 illustrate the evolution of the positions taken by the Regions in the moment of the electoral results (vertical axis to the left), of the programmatic speech (vertical axis in the middle) and of the DPEFRs (vertical axis to the right). Following Laver and Garry (2000) we normalize the left-to-right political dimension of the electoral results to a scale correlated to that of the reference texts for the programmatic speeches. By that, the most left-wing Region is assigned a score equal to -1, the most right wing Region a score of +1, while the scores for all other Regions are normalized in a linear fashion. These values are reported on the vertical axis on the left. The values reported on the other two axes are, instead, the same transformed scores of Tables 2 and 4. Furthermore, we report information only for the

Regions for which we have information for all the three moments (balanced samples). Finally, to gauge some evidence of how the process evolves through time, we have separated the values for the 7th legislature (reported in Figure 5, seven Regions) from those of the 8th legislature (reported in Figure 6, eleven Regions). Straight lines indicate perfect consistency between the scores that a Region obtains in each moment, which is evidence of electoral accountability. Angles, instead, denote changes of position, thus lower consistency between the three moments, which is evidence of lower electoral accountability.

The Figures provide two interesting results. Firstly, contrary to what Putnam (1993) declares to find in his analysis of Italian regional politics in the 1970s and the 1980s, there is no evidence of a North-South pattern in the degree of accountability. Figure 5 shows that Sicily 7 is almost a perfectly straight line, whilst the sharpest changes of scores are those of Basilicata 7 and Lazio 7. But even Veneto 7 and Emilia Romagna 7, the two most Northern Regions featured in Figure 5, are characterized by noticeable angles. Figure 8, about the 8th legislature, reveals remarkable changes of position of Lazio, Abruzzo and Lombardia; on the contrary, Piemonte (in the North) and Sardegna (in the South) describe almost straight lines, i.e., no change of scores.

Secondly, a comparison between the Figures immediately exposes that the 8th legislature is characterized by much more remarkable changes of position than the 7th. There is thus evidence that accountability is further eroded as we move away from the time of the institutional reforms of 1995. Truly, just two legislatures cannot be taken as conclusive evidence, but the pattern recorded is certainly worrying as far as electoral accountability, on e of the main goals of the 1995 reforms, is concerned.

We thus lean towards the interpretation of the results based on a loss of electoral accountability due to the practice of politics, rather than to budgetary constraints and to limited availability of grants from the Central Government. This erosion seems to become

more serious as we move away from the reforms of 1995 and is not limited to certain areas of the country. All in all, the Governors of the Italian Regions do not walk like they talk.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to provide some empirical evidence on the degree of consistency between the distributions, along a left-to-right political dimension, of the electoral results, of the programmatic speeches of the Governors and of the DPEFRs of the Italian Regions for the two legislatures that followed the 1995 institutional reform. We argue that the greater the degree of consistency among these distributions, the higher is the Governor's electoral accountability, because changes in the political orientation of the Governor shows up as a change in the score (and possibly of the relative position) obtained in one of these three moments. We have based our interpretation of the left-to-right distribution of the electoral results on the evaluation of the ideologies of the Italian (regional) political parties. The methodology for content analysis developed by Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003) is instead used to estimate the left-to-right distribution of the programmatic speeches and of the ensuing DPEFRs of the Governors of the Regions.

The comparison of the distributions of the Regions in these three moments, performed by means of a series of Spearman rank correlation indexes, provides evidence of some erosion of electoral accountability, mostly in the passage from the electoral results to the programmatic speeches, namely, right after the Governor is elected. A lesser degree of erosion appears to occur moving from the speeches to the stage of the DPEFRs, when political decisions begin to take shape. Furthermore, this erosion seems to become more serious as time goes by and appears to be a fairly general phenomenon, not circumscribed to certain areas of the country.

Data limitations prevented us to perform more systematic analyses of this erosion of accountability, as well as to extend our inquiry to the pre-electoral stage (the candidates'

manifestos) and the first actual decisions, as evidenced by the levels of spending in regional

programs. These are the most obvious research avenues to pursue in the future.

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APPENDIX A: DATA SOURCES

Dataset Regioni Italiane 1970-2002 CRENOS, available from www.crenos.it.

VII Legislature:
Regione Basilicata. Consiglio regionale. Seduta del 13 giugno 2000. Relazione programmatica del presidente della Giunta Regionale Bubbico.

Regione Basilicata. Giunta Regionale. DAPEF 2003-05 Nota di aggiornamento del 29 gennaio 2003.

Regione Emilia-Romagna. Atti Consiliari. Terza Seduta. Resoconto Integrale. 22 giugno 2000. Comunicazione del Presidente della Giunta in merito al Documento di Programmazione della Giunta.

Regione Lazio. Consiglio regionale. Prima seduta pubblica. Resoconto stenografico. 6 giugno 2000.Comunicazione del Presidente della Giunta Storace.

Regione Lazio. Assessorato al bilancio, programmazione economico-finanziaria e partecipazione. DPEFR 2004-2006.

Regione Liguria. Atti del Consiglio. Resoconti Integrali. Seduta n.2 del 24 maggio 2000. Comunicazioni del Presidente Biasotti della Giunta regionale concernenti il programma della giunta (o.d.g. n.6).

Regione Sicilia. Seduta n.9 del 25 settembre 2001. Comunicazione del Presidente della Regione Cuffaro sul Programma di Governo.

Regione Umbria. Consiglio Regionale. I Sessione Straordinaria. 19 giugno 2000. Resoconto stenografico. Dichiarazioni programmatiche del Presidente della Giunta Regionale Lorenzetti, pp.7-25.

Regione Autonoma della Valle d'Aosta. Séance du 30 Juin 1998. Object n.11/XI. Allocution du noveau Président Dino Viérin du Governement et programme de la nouvelle majorité.

Regione Autonoma della Sardegna. Renato Soru, "Un programma per cambiare la Sardegna".

Regione Autonoma della Sardegna. Centro Regionale di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria. DPEF 2005-2007. Approvato dalla giunta regionale il 4 novembre 2004.

Regione Toscana. Consiglio Regionale. DPEF 2005. Scelte Strategiche e finalità programmatiche di fine legislatura. Bollettino Ufficiale della Regione Toscana n.28 del 4 agosto 2004.

VIII Legislature:
Regione Abruzzo. Seduta n.1. del 16 maggio 2005. Resoconto integrale n.15/2005. Programma del Presidente della Giunta.

Regione Basilicata. Relazione programmatica del presidente della giunta regionale Vito de Filippo.

Regione Calabria. Programma del presidente della giunta Regionale della Calabria Agazio Loiero "Un progetto per crescere insieme." Allegato alla deliberazione n.4 del 17 maggio 2005. 17 maggio 2005.

Regione Emilia Romagna. Intervento programmatico del presidente Vasco Errani pronunciato all'Assemblea legislative. Seduta del 7 giugno 2005.

Regione Lazio. Atti consiliari. Resoconto della discussione. Seduta n.1 del 18 maggio 2005. Dichiarazione del Presidente della Giunta Marrazzo.

Regione Lazio. Assessorato al bilancio, programmazione economico-finanziaria e partecipazione. DPEFR 2006-2008. Documento approvato dalla Giunta 11 ottobre 2005.

Regione Lombardia. DPEFR 2006-08. Bollettino Ufficiale del 10 novembre 2005.

Regione Marche. Atti consiliari. Seduta n.1 del 2 maggio 2005. Illustrazione del programma di governo e presentazione degli assessori dap arte del presidente della Giunta Regionale, pp.6-18.

Regione Marche. DPEFR 2007-2009. Allegato alla deliberazione n.37. Approvata dal Consiglio Regionale nella seduta del 19 dicembre 2006.

Regione Autonoma della Valle d'Aosta. Séance du 22 feurier 2006. Object n.1795/XII. Allocution du Président et integration du programme de législature.

Regione Veneto. Giunta regionale. Programma di Governo per l'VIII legislatura approvato con DGR n.1548 del 21 giugno 2005.

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APPENDIX B: LIST, ABBREVIATIONS AND TYPE OF STATUTE OF THE ITALIAN REGIONS

N.	AREA	NAME	ABBREVIATION	STATUTE
1	North	Val d'Aosta	VDA	Special
2	North	Piemonte	PIE	Ordinary
3	North	Lombardia	LOM	Ordinary
4	North	Trentino-Alto Adige	TAA	Special
5	North	Veneto	VEN	Ordinary
6	North	Liguria	LIG	Ordinary
7	North	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	FVG	Special
8	Center	Emilia Romagna	ERO	Ordinary
9	Center	Toscana	TOS	Ordinary
10	Center	Marche	MAR	Ordinary
11	Center	Umbria	UMB	Ordinary
12	Center	Lazio	LAZ	Ordinary
13	Center	Abruzzo	ABR	Ordinary
14	South	Campania	CAM	Ordinary
15	South	Molise	MOL	Ordinary
16	South	Puglia	PUG	Ordinary
17	South	Basilicata	BAS	Ordinary
18	South	Calabria	CAL	Ordinary
19	South	Sicilia	SIC	Special
20	South	Sardegna	SAR	Special