Causes and processes of shrinkage in the old industrialized city of Taranto

Domenico Camarda, Francesco Rotondo and Francesco Selicato
1. Introduction

2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

3. Policymaking vs. shrinkage: A synthetic account at different government levels in Taranto.

4. Brief conclusions: Theoretical knowledge vs. main features of shrinkage
Identity

- Country: Italy
- City: Taranto.

Context

History
It is the third-largest continental city of southern Italy: according to the 2001 census, it has a population of 201,349.

Taranto is an important commercial and military port. It has well-developed steel and iron foundries, oil refineries, chemical works, some shipyards for building warships, and food-processing factories. Taranto's pre-history dates back to the 8th century BC when it was founded as a Greek colony. The ancient city was situated on a peninsula, protected by a helm; the modern city has been built over the ancient Greek necropolis.
1. Introduction

Since their birth, cities are continually affected by processes of change - more or less extended in time and space – of the physical and socio-economic environment.

In recent decades the effects of de-industrialization, the reflections of the overall economic competitiveness on the local economies, the loss of function and/or environmental quality, the poor results of policies of social integration have given rise to the formation of large distressed urban areas, contributing heavily to the decline of entire cities, characterized by unemployment, poverty, injustice and social exclusion (Conway, Konvitz, 2000) and then by a significant decrease in the population in favour of urban areas more attractive (Wiechmann, 2009).

It must be said, however, that until few years ago in many European countries urban regeneration policies have been limited mostly to interventions focused on areas and/or neighborhoods of fairly small dimension, while the state of great difficulty of wider parts of city has often been neglected (Kazmierczak et al., 2007; 2009).

In some cases, in the absence of a unified vision extended to the broader context of studies, there were actions strictly aimed at the recovery of single urban areas which have had negative repercussions on other space ambiots, so triggering concatenate processes with uncertain and unpredictable outcomes (Elkin, Cooper, 1993).
1. Introduction

Therefore, in order to cope with the unpredictability of outcomes, it is necessary to adopt flexible and forward-looking strategies supported by a solid decision-making process, institutional capacity and consistent determination, with a methodological strictness of the analysis (Kazmierczak et al., 2009).

Other authors highlight the differences between the aims of urban renewal programs and the problems they try to solve (Skifter Andersen, 2001; 2002), stressing that even in successful cases more frequent and longer-term efforts are required to achieve the desired outcomes.

The incapacity to focus on the real problems of shrinking cities have already been highlighted by OECD (1998), arguing that traditional policies have failed to halt the downward spiral that hit the distressed urban areas, because they were not able to address the complex nature of the problem.

In the case of Taranto we have three causes of shrinkage playing together (de-industrialization, sub-urbanization, environmental pollution). Therefore, regeneration strategies need to accomplish different goals hoping to face the shrinkage.

In the following slides we’ll discuss the main features of shrinkage in Taranto, giving a synthetic account of the principal urban regeneration strategies already followed and some reflections about results of these policies facing shrinkage.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

As Wiechmann (2009) already noted, with regard to the population development in shrinking cities, three major aspects are essential: total evolution, migration and aging.

Total evolution and aging

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taranto</td>
<td>227,342</td>
<td>244,101</td>
<td>217,809</td>
<td>202,033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data reflect the program of industrialization started in the city in the 1950s and 1960s and, later on, the crisis experienced by larger firms, resulting in de-industrialization and demographic decline.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

Total evolution in the entire Province

A part of this decrease is accounted for by some neighbouring municipalities as Grottaglie, Leporano (their population is growing between 2.5% and 7.5% between the census of 1991 and 2001), emphasizing the phenomena of suburbanization.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

Migration

Net migration of the Municipality of Taranto, between 2002 and 2008.

From the graph it is clear that the net migration of the Municipality of Taranto in the last seven years are always negative and that, on average, about 1,123 inhabitants per year (arithmetic average) emigrated from the municipality.

Elaboration on ISTAT data.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

This migratory movement is not compensated by a positive natural balance, but on the contrary also shows a negative trend, as shown in the chart.

The natural balance (Live births - deaths) of the Municipality of Taranto, between 2002 and 2008 is always negative except in the years 2004 and 2008. In these two years, in any case, the natural balance is significantly below the social balance previously shown, an average of 1,123 inhabitants per year. Therefore, the overall balance remains negative.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

The loss of population is particularly relevant for those aged between 25 and 34 (-9.97 ‰ in 2002), the most important for university and job.

Birth rate remains fairly high and fairly constant.

The continuous and consistently high birth rate in recent years shows that the reasons for the decline of the population largely depends on high emigration which, as noted earlier, afflicts mainly the pool of young workers (25-34 years) and those who are creating new families.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

Economy and labour market

From the Table it is clear that principal job market indicators for Taranto Province are coherent with those of the entire Apulia Region, which is a European objective 1 Region, as the other South Italy regions. The only data that is clear under the national and regional average is the Unemployed rate, that in the case of Taranto Province is 4% higher (18% respect to 14,7% of Apulia Region).
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

Economy and labour market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMUNI</th>
<th>Attività economica</th>
<th>Altre attività</th>
<th>Totale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricoltura</td>
<td>Industria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comune di Taranto</td>
<td>1.567</td>
<td>13.767</td>
<td>55.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincia di Taranto</td>
<td>22.390</td>
<td>46.563</td>
<td>164.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regione Puglia</td>
<td>140.486</td>
<td>336.530</td>
<td>1,170.913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALIA</td>
<td>1,153.678</td>
<td>7,028.981</td>
<td>20,993.732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Employment by economic sector and territories. Absolute values (thousands) and percentages. The 25% of employees works in industry in the city of Taranto and the 28% in the Province and in the Region.

Also in the city of Taranto, as in other European cities and countries, the service sector is the one in which there is the biggest number of employed, although the industry still employs 25% of total employees.

In the city of Taranto there is Europe's largest steel plant, which still employs about 13,346 people (see figure below), or nearly 100% of employment in manufacturing in the city (equal to 13,767 as you can see from table III).
Deindustrialization is primarily manifested in a change in the economic sectors due to the change of the city role as traditional manufacturing location (Fordist to post-Fordist).

Yet in the case of Taranto the problem is that declining industries occupy a large dimension of territorial space and of workers.

So, it’s quite difficult to think of a city without steel and iron industries.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.


Percentage distribution of employees by age group in the establishment ILVA of Taranto. Employees are still today included in the young working age strips (21-30 years) and only 23% of them exceeds 40 years.
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

Economy and labour market

Taranto could be described as an economic mono-structural region, whose main characteristic is the long-term (structural) fall in demand and a resulting crisis situation, which may spill over to other firms, industries or economic sectors (Cunningham-Sabot and Fol, 2010).

In the case of Taranto there are also other economic sectors with a significant impact on employment and income-generation (sea activities as fisheries, trade, military activities).

In the case of Taranto, environmental issues represent a significant problem in the long-term trajectories as they aren’t single catastrophic events, but they are strictly related to the economic ones, so it couldn’t be solved separately one from the other (industry causes pollution and contamination which could cause also sub urbanization).
2. The case of Taranto de-industrialised city and the main features of shrinkage.

High pollution is probably one of the most impacting factor, along with labour shortage, why people of working age could emigrate. Maybe cause of ecological disturbances can occur in relatively short to medium term periods, while their consequences have a medium to long-term character. Thus, the ecological component will play a major role for future tasks and responsibilities in shrinking cities.

Pollutants (hydrocarbons, dioxins and furans) from the thirty Italian provinces
3. A synthetic account of urban regeneration policies.

Many planning and regeneration policy efforts have been carried out at the national, regional, provincial and urban levels in Taranto over time, most of them not explicitly connected to the shrinkage problems of the area.

National level

The national government’s activity has been substantially fickle and fragmented in facing the problems of the deindustrialization of Taranto, despite its historical heavy responsibilities in the industrialization process (Borri and Camarda, 1990).

In particular, after selling the steel plants off to the private sector, a plan for the environmental regeneration of Taranto urban and provincial area was set up in 1998, backed by public (20%) and private (80%) funds.

Actions for more than 130 mln€ were scheduled for the whole activities, in particular aimed at regenerating degraded and/or dismissed industrial/urban areas, as well as at abating pollution and disposing waste.

Expected results were a medium-term improvement of the general environmental quality, but the difficulty of public financing and of leveraging private funds have caused the plan to remain rather unimplemented up to date.
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Regional level

The regional level of policymaking and planning was set up in 1970 by law, but Apulia regional government did not have financial resources nor enough personnel to play its administrative roles for long time.

It is basically reticent toward the deindustrialization problems of Taranto and it underestimates the actual feasibility of some environmental norms, that raise conflicts with local communities and often remain unimplemented.

Important actions follow the issue of the new planning law in 2001, which gives importance to the singling out of territorial structures (i.e., environmental peculiarities, urban neighbourhoods, cultural heritages etc.) as catalysts of development.

They are potentially important for Taranto, in its need of rethinking, regenerating its territorial structure and therefore opposing urban shrinkage starting from its real identity.

However, at the same time, the regional government issues new financing norms for new housing, although eco-compatible, and periphery rehabilitation, often preferring them to regenerating inner areas.
3. A synthetic account of urban regeneration policies.

Provincial level

The provincial level, between the regional and communal contexts, shows itself a low level of service, despite the strategic prerogatives that such contexts have traditionally developed in other European industrial areas (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006; Healey, 2009; Wannop, 1995).

Particularly the metropolitan performances of the area suffer from that situation, because internal flows and synergies remain fragmented, episodic, lacking in strategic infrastructuring.

Territorial organization gets weaker, from the standpoints of urban and inter-urban functions (low system performance), economic linkages (low district performances), environmental connectivity (low ecologic resources performance).

The only robust provincial connective fabrics are represented by a pervasive housing sprawl, through which the hinterland takes advantage from the loss of attractiveness of Taranto to set up new developments.
3. A synthetic account of urban regeneration policies.

*Municipal level*

A strategic, structural, shared rethinking of the territory has never carried out anymore.

The urban level of regeneration planning develops coherently with the fragmentation and the low incisiveness of the national and regional levels. After the industrial crisis of the 1970s, a strategic, structural, shared rethinking of the territory has never carried out anymore.

The only strategy it seems a flow of concrete that is (perhaps) challenged only by the perverse game of the powerful lobbies of housing and land owners in the attempt of raising housing and real estate rents (Brueckner and Helsley, 2010; Kauko and d'Amato, 2008).

Yet frequent are the injections of new housing under the rhetoric demagogy of revitalization and regeneration. Salinella neighbourhood contract (3 mln€), Urban II program (39 mln€), Tamburi program agreement (68 mln€), Paolo VI program (4 mln€), Talsano program (4 mln€), Inner city interventions (6 mln€) are all autonomous programs for different urban portions that are potentially useful (Perrone, 2009).
3. A synthetic account of urban regeneration policies.

*Municipal level*

However, as traditionally occurred in other European contexts, they result as being confined, uncoordinated, partial with reference to the sectors of activity and lacking in objectives and regional strategies of territorial organizations.

Although financially huge, their contribution to the dramatic needs of socioeconomic development of the city, of opposing shrinkage and environmental collapse is therefore unknown.

It is unknown because the strategies of socioeconomic and environmental relaunching of the area are unknown, the time schedules associated to such strategies are unknown, the management model of the synergetic implementation of programs are unknown.
Such cases show the paradoxes of the absence of a comprehensive structural plan, in that it is possible to leave apart the fierce (environmental, social, economic, infrastructural) frictions at the borderline of areas pertaining to different programs (such as the troublesome industrial area), so disregarding well known international lessons (Healey, 2009).
4. Theoretical knowledge vs. main features of shrinkage

For most OECD countries, as already noted by Martinez-Fernandez (2010), the transformation of industrial production into the knowledge economy has developed new industries, new business, and new forms of knowledge production and innovative activity.

While the most prosperous cities reap the benefits of globalization and the attraction of talents into a dynamic labour force, “shrinking cities” experience just the opposite – the negative effects of internationalization of markets, migration of production and the labour force, a weakened innovation system, and loss of city life vitality.

In the case of Taranto the phenomenon of population shrinkage is not only tied directly to generalized employment conditions or to the capacity of trans-national corporations to externalize their social costs (such as resulting from productivity changes) at the expense of host communities and labour, but also to the environmental conditions of the entire territory, characterised by an high level of air and water pollution (hydrocarbons, dioxins and furans, as already described).

This high level of pollution is a real threat for young couples, thinking of the best place where bringing up babies and establishing families.
4. Theoretical knowledge vs. main features of shrinkage

Besides, pollution reduces the attractiveness of the city that is traditionally high because of the presence of the sea and because Taranto is an ancient Greek city, with a very important port and many cultural activities, especially in archaeology and historical subjects.

The effects of pollution to perception of life’s quality by population is clearer and more evident than in case of environmental change in cities due, for instance, to global temperature data, such as the regression of glaciers, and the disappearance of certain species from their customary habitats, as discussed for example by Mulligan (2009).

The traditional tourist patterns of the region had lost their attractiveness for foreign travellers and the province remains just a regional tourist destination, despite of the relevant potential of the area, under the point of view of cultural and environmental richness of such an interesting territorial context.
4. Theoretical knowledge vs. main features of shrinkage

As already described in the precedent section, strategies applied in urban regeneration projects, are mainly physical. No triggering social and economic processes which could alter those dynamics is in progress.

That’s not enough to contrast such a complex phenomenon, which has so multiple dimensions (Rotondo, Selicato, 2010).

In this climate Taranto has experimented a relevant number of neighbourhood regeneration process

Just looking that the majority of these process it hasn’t been completed or that some of theme have completed only the physical interventions and have failed in the social and economic goals, could give us a significant evaluation of results.

Perhaps one of the reason is that in the urban regeneration approach as often declined in Italy and in many other countries of Europe, it has been tried to face physical deterioration using always the traditional planning model of growth trying to favour a new growth, building new buildings with public utilities and services.
4. Theoretical knowledge vs. main features of shrinkage

In this case of a city, we have three causes of shrinkage playing together (de-industrialization, sub-urbanization, environmental pollution).

Therefore, regeneration strategies need to accomplish different goals hoping to face the shrinkage.

It is a new challenge for planning cultures because it is necessary to use new tools such as local taxation, regeneration of existing neighbourhoods instead of creating new ones, with a strong public coordination in a structured collaborative planning, as recently Healey (2010) put down.

The case of Taranto motivates planners to reflect on the target goals of policies and programmes in cities where the public sphere of power has shown often its weakness.

In particular, experts need to discuss if there is an integrated approach of local economic development, skills development, and job creation strategies and programs in areas of shrinkage, such as Taranto, matching collaborative approaches with structured and clear levels of government, with the big challenge of facing environmental pollution -which is a threaten for any action and makes any success much more difficult.
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KIITOS KAIKILLE KUULIJOILLE

DANK U VOOR UW AANDACHT

GRAZIE PER L’ATTENZIONE