

M. Fornasari, O. Mazzotti (eds.), *Anima civitatis. Capitale umano e sviluppo economico in Romagna dall'Ottocento al Duemila*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2018, pp. 238.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the relationship between education and human capital has been among the most broadly analyzed and hotly debated scholarly issues. It is not by chance, then, that the focus of this book's first chapter is precisely this topic, with a series of important lines of interpretation. Especially in the closing decades of the century, major progress was achieved in this field of study with the spotlighting of the link between human capital investment and technological innovation. Despite the countless suggestions of the international literature, Italian economic historians, after some promising inquiries, have shown only faltering interest in this line of research. Yet, as the editors point out, documentary sources are abundant. And this includes the Romagna district, permitting verification, in a limited area, of the "contemporaneity differential" in the application of national legislation: namely "delays, resistance, but also advances with respect to more general guidelines" (p. 22). In general, the historical reconstruction of the connections between the expansion of education, human capital formation and economic development elucidates the economic and social evolution of Romagna, where traditional productive identities have coexisted with major transformations. This trend has not been

strictly linear, hinging in large part on the modernization of agriculture but also extending to other productive sectors, and has been achieved thanks to the contribution of education, the "*anima civitatis*" of change. The book's four chapters outline these advances. The substantial, extensively documented first chapter by Massimo Fornasari shows how the "education of the people" pursued by French revolutionaries in the early nineteenth century could be achieved through the "education of the citizen." The author also notes the emergence of some more dynamic areas. This positive attitude to education was essentially abandoned in Restoration Europe, with the return of the Papal State rule in Romagna; and this trend was common to other pre-unification states in Italy as well.

The second chapter, by Fornasari, Mauro Carboni and Omar Mazzotti, sheds light on the relationship between education and economic development from Italian unification to the First World War. In 1861 Romagna was one of the most educationally backward areas in Italy, with an overall illiteracy rate of over 80%, and peaks of 86.8% and 84.1% in the provinces of Forlì and Ravenna. This troublesome situation is explained by the lack of "a true educational intention" on the part of public institutions. And indeed, when by the end of the nineteenth century the attitude of the political class towards education changed, Romagna along with many other parts of the Kingdom saw a significant improvement, cutting the illiteracy rate impressively to around 40%, thanks to stepped-up investment in basic popular education, according to the guiding principle that all citizens have the right to be educated. The third chapter, by Fornasari and Francesca Fauri, analyzes the role of education in the Fascist period. The fight against illiteracy in Romagna continued, especially in the more remote areas. In general, Gentile's school reform made a significant contribution, but at the same time it had negative effects on vocational education. Above all, in any case, it was Fascist ideology that stressed the importance of education. School was seen as the center of the process of renewal of mankind, and the resources allocated to school construction were mul-

tiplied. While there was a revival in rural education, the cities continued to benefit from a denser network of schools.

As is shown in the fourth chapter, by Fornasari and Massimo Canali, it was in the postwar period that the significant contribution of education lent major impetus to the economic take-off in Romagna. As a consequence, by the early 1960s illiteracy had become a “historical relic to be eliminated.” Yet there remained a good many problems, such as the persistence of *functional illiteracy*, a term that summarizes the difficulties in the relationship between the Romagna region and modernity. This awareness is what sparked new efforts for effective improvement in the relationship between education, human capital and development. The inequalities in educational levels within the area remained basically unchanged in these decades, as they are the product of profound historical, socioeconomic and cultural differences. Overall, basic progress has been achieved in technical and vocational education, “the type of secondary school which more than any other has driven the growth of upper secondary education in modern Italy” (p. 180). This trend has generally been in line with the expectations of the region’s young people, so much so that over the decades technical and vocational education expanded rapidly. This process produced appreciable benefits within the span of just a few decades, thanks to the strong support of local political institutions through an ambitious school building program and an efficient transport network. This evolution has proved complicated to manage, however, as it has also been affected by the reversal of population growth in Romagna since the turn of the century. There has been considerable progress recently, notably the creation of university centers in Forlì, Cesena, Ravenna and Rimini, which respond to the need for strategic growth in a local economy faced with the challenges of internationalization and globalization. Fornasari’s concluding remarks are right on target: as the history of Romagna shows, “the key role entrusted to the strengthening of education for the civil and cultural growth of the whole territory is evident.” This observation is especially relevant today in Italy, whose funding for education is below the

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European average, making a more decisive orientation to economic development uncertain.

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